

Op-ed **T**

Saddam and Trump's shared delusion

By Mohammad Sarfi
Editor-in-Chief

TEHRAN — Yesterday marked the 46th anniversary of Saddam's invasion of Iran. In the early days of the war, while standing on occupied Iranian soil near the country's south-western borders, Saddam told reporters that he would hold his next interview with them in Tehran a few days later.

Saddam's delusion was not without reason. Iran had just gone through a turbulent revolution that had fundamentally transformed almost every pillar of the country, while many institutions were still in their infancy. ▶ Page 3

China rejects US sanctions on Iranian airlines

TEHRAN — China's Foreign Ministry has announced that Beijing opposes US sanctions against Iran, including sanctions targeting Iranian airlines.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Tuesday that Beijing opposes unilateral sanctions against Iran, describing them as illegal.

"We oppose the continued imposition of unilateral sanctions that are illegal and lack a basis in international law or authorization from the UN Security Council," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Jiakun stressed that Beijing also opposes what it described as illegal US sanctions against Iranian airlines. ▶ Page 3

Iran, Uzbekistan eye AI-driven agricultural co-op as trade delegation aims for \$2b

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN— In a joint meeting and subsequent conference on agricultural cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan, the two countries' agriculture ministers emphasized joint investment in AI-based modern farming, livestock breeding, and pasture development. With a large Iranian trade delegation present—comprising over 100 companies and heads of provincial chambers—officials outlined plans to boost bilateral agricultural trade from \$200 million to \$600 million within two years, while broader trade ambitions target \$2 billion. Iran also highlighted its transport capacities to provide landlocked Uzbekistan with access to open waters. ▶ Page 4



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Leader on the beginning of the new academic year:

The Power of Knowledge, Joined With Piety and Ethics, Protects Humanity From Criminal US and Zionist Regime

TEHRAN — Iran's Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, has described power rooted in knowledge, piety and ethics as a shield against what he called the "savagery of the system of domination," particularly referring to the United States and the Zionist regime.

The memorable days marking the start of the academic year renew the grief of separation from our departed children.

In a message marking the beginning of the new academic year, the Leader addressed Iranian students, teachers and professors, paying tribute to those who were martyred during the recent Imposed War and urging the younger generation to pursue knowledge, skills, ethical development and the preservation of national identity.

The full text of the Leader's message is as follows:

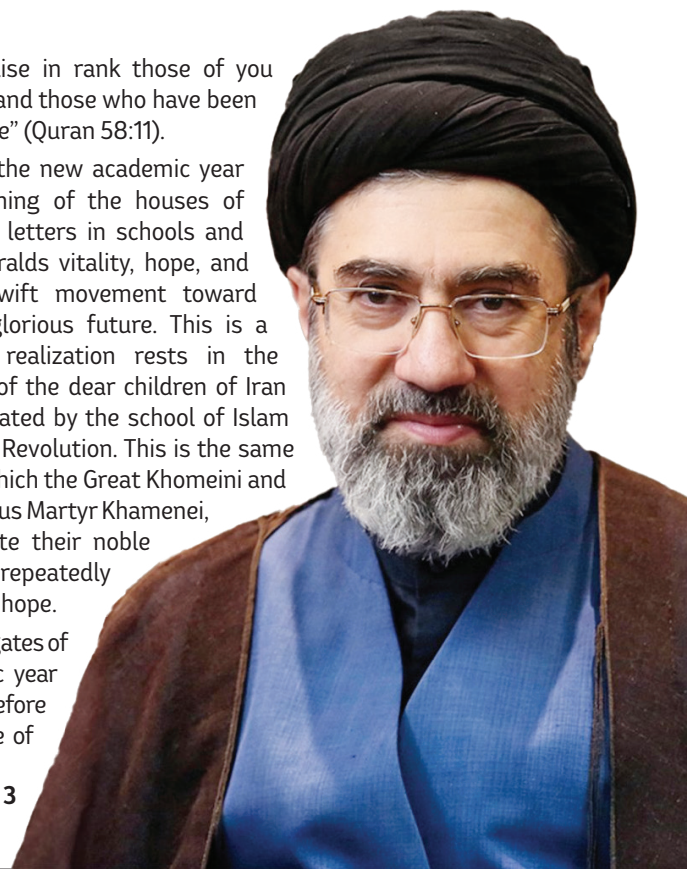
In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

"Allah will raise in rank those of you who have faith and those who have been given knowledge" (Quran 58:11).

The start of the new academic year and the reopening of the houses of knowledge and letters in schools and universities, heralds vitality, hope, and the nation's swift movement toward a bright and glorious future. This is a future whose realization rests in the capable hands of the dear children of Iran and those educated by the school of Islam and the Islamic Revolution. This is the same generation in which the Great Khomeini and the magnanimous Martyr Khamenei, may God elevate their noble stations, repeatedly expressed their hope.

Now that the gates of a new academic year are opening before a vast multitude of students,

▶ Page 3



Pezeshkian: UN General Assembly must restore global trust and help end wars

TEHRAN — Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has expressed hope that the annual United Nations General Assembly can help rebuild confidence in the international system and contribute to ending wars and bloodshed around the world. Speaking to reporters before departing Tehran for New York on Tuesday, Pezeshkian said Iran would use the UN platform to present its positions and draw international attention to the oppression suffered by Iranian civilians, particularly children, during the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

"We will express the oppression of the Iranian children in Minab and Lamerd and the brutality of the perpetrators of these crimes," the president said, adding that such acts were incompatible with basic human values. ▶ Page 3

Iran possesses sustainable deterrence, Qalibaf affirms

TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has warned the United States against attempting to pressure Iran into submission, stressing that the country's military capabilities and sustained deterrence provide Tehran with the capacity to respond to threats while pursuing its national interests through diplomacy.

Speaking at a ceremony in Tehran on Tuesday honoring veterans of Iran's Sacred Defense, Qalibaf said Iran's military capabilities had reached a level that enabled the country to strike any target it chose with its missiles, without restrictions. ▶ Page 2

IRGC says talks are another battlefield as Iran reveals new weapon test

TEHRAN — Iran is maintaining its military readiness while keeping diplomacy available as an instrument of national policy, Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) spokesperson Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi said, stressing that negotiations should not be equated with compromise and can themselves constitute "another battlefield."

"Negotiation does not mean compromise; negotiation is another scene of war," Mohebbi told the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), explaining that while conventional warfare is fought with weapons, negotiations involve "war with words, arguments and diplomatic methods."

He said Iran's Armed Forces are fully prepared for military confrontation, while decisions over whether to fight or negotiate are made within the country's political system and under the command of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. ▶ Page 2



Mehr Media Group receives two awards at OANA Awards 2026 in Moscow

▶ Page 8



Women's kata secure silver at 2026 Asian Games

▶ Page 6

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

Diplomacy and military power don't negate each other

Sobh-e-No emphasized the necessity of diplomacy backed by military power. Unfortunately, after the third (round of) imposed war, a false binary of war or negotiation has taken hold in Iran's domestic political discourse. Some view negotiation as contradicting resistance, while others see war as an obstacle to diplomacy. Diplomacy without military backing does not work, and military power itself is inseparable from diplomacy. In other words, it is the battlefield that gives diplomacy credibility; without military strength, diplomacy turns into surrender. Today, Iran has managed to challenge the American-led regional order, but through diplomacy it can shape the foundations of a new order based on its own interests. Smart governance in today's turbulent world is the art of managing this synergy so that diplomacy can turn battlefield achievements into lasting political gains.

Donya-e-Eqtasad: The emergence of a different bottleneck

Donya-e-Eqtasad examined a new challenge beyond the oil market, writing that the global energy market is now grappling not with a shortage of oil, but with a shortage of ships—a crucial shift that could reshape many traditional dynamics of the energy market. The significance of this development is not limited to the war with Iran or disruptions in maritime routes. The war is more an accelerator than the root cause of the crisis. Even before the first shot was fired in the Strait of Hormuz, the oil shipping market showed signs of structural strain; the Persian Gulf war merely deepened that gap. Until now, the oil market viewed choke-points like Hormuz, Bab al-Mandab, and the Suez Canal as sensitive geopolitical nodes. Now a different bottleneck is emerging: fleet capacity and the pricing power of tanker owners. This is where the “hidden empire of the sea” takes shape—power that lies neither in oil fields nor in trading rooms, but in the ability to move barrels between the two.

Resalat: The new doctrine of the US–Israeli coalition

Resalat analyzed the new doctrine of the US–Israeli coalition. The coalition's current goal is not necessarily the destruction of infrastructure or ticking off military targets. The adversary knows well that any large-scale military confrontation with Iran would impose an irreparable cost on its regional interests. Therefore, it seeks to implement a doctrine of military pressure for political surrender. The aim is to disrupt Iran's decision-making machinery and public perception by casting a shadow of war and applying intermittent pressure. The coalition's ultimate objectives are, at the public level,

to inject fear, despair, and insecurity so that the system's popular support erodes. At the governance level, to overshadow the resolve of decision-makers and push Iran toward retreat, abandoning red lines, and accepting dictated conditions. They want to use a display of military power to implant a sense of defeat in the minds of Iranians—achieving surrender without needing a full-scale, prolonged war.

Ettelaat: Analysis of Trump's proposal for talks with Pezeshkian at UN

Ettelaat covered Trump's openness to meeting Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Supporters argue that such a meeting would not be a friendly encounter but a direct, unmediated negotiation with the highest US authority to defend Iran's interests. The meeting would not imply agreement or endorsement; rather, it would be a negotiation aimed at securing benefits. It is not a sign of weakness but of capability—using all tools, from war to diplomacy, to achieve national goals. Opponents ask why Pezeshkian should meet Trump when there is no guarantee of success. Trump is highly instinctive and emotional. This situation, however, creates an opportunity for Iran to convert military victories into political-economic gains and to move the country out of a war posture with the US, opening a new chapter in Tehran–Washington relations. This new chapter does not mean turning Iran and the US into political allies or security partners, but rather exiting the abnormal, tense, warlike state.

Hamshahri: Trump should not be given space

Hamshahri, a newspaper run by the Municipality of Tehran, said reports circulated that Trump cut short his weekend vacation at Camp David retreat and returned to the White House. His early return comes as he reviews next steps in the dispute with Iran. He had spoken of an imminent decision—either destroying Iran's government or continuing diplomacy. Targeted speculation also claimed he returned to order a strike on Yemen to reopen Bab al-Mandab to restore Saudi oil exports. The main purpose of such narratives is to disrupt the resolve of Iran and Yemen and prevent increased pressure on the US to break the maritime blockade. The paper argues that Iran must not allow a desperate and criminal Trump administration to use diplomatic games to “negotiate-therapy” its way out of self-inflicted economic-political suffocation. The US can end the blockade if it wants, but it seeks to use Iran's leverage instead. Such trickery must not be allowed.

Leader mourns passing of Grand Ayatollah Shobeiri Zanjani

TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei has expressed his profound condolences on the passing of Grand Ayatollah Seyed Mousa Shubairi Zanjani, describing his death as a profound loss that has left a considerable void among the foremost Shiite scholars of the contemporary era.

In a condolence message issued on Tuesday, Ayatollah Khamenei said the late Grand Ayatollah had devoted virtually the entirety of his life to the pursuit of knowledge, teaching and scholarly research, earning enduring recognition from his teachers and fellow scholars for the depth, precision and rigor of his learning.

The Leader underscored the eminent cleric's mastery of the diverse disciplines underpinning the derivation of Islamic legal rulings, noting that his scholarly lessons were distinguished by extensive research, meticulous analysis and rigorous examination, even when delivered to a relatively small circle of students.

Ayatollah Khamenei further noted that, over more than three decades, numerous scholars had drawn upon Grand Ayatollah Shobeiri Zanjani's profound knowledge, subsequently carrying his intellectual legacy into their own academic and educational endeavors.

He also highlighted the late scholar's humil-



ity and fatherly demeanor toward students and fellow scholars, portraying his presence as one marked not only by the imparting of knowledge but also by a continuous spirit of learning.

The Leader said the passing of such an exceptional scholar had created a significant intellectual and scholarly void among the leading Shiite researchers of the contemporary era — a gap that, he added, may prove difficult to fill for years to come.

Ayatollah Khamenei extended his condolences to Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance), the Islamic seminaries, and, in particular, Grand Ayatollah Shobeiri Zanjani's students, admirers, and family. He also prayed to God Almighty to elevate the late scholar's spiritual station and grant him divine grace and mercy.

Pezeshkian: UN General Assembly must restore global trust and help end wars

From page 1 ► Pezeshkian traveled to New York to attend the 81st session of the UN General Assembly, whose high-level General Debate opened on September 22 and will continue through September 26, before resuming on September 28. The annual gathering brings together heads of state, government leaders and senior representatives from UN member states to address major international challenges and present their countries' positions.

The 81st session is being held under the theme “Restoring trust, managing transformation: a United Nations that delivers for all.” The theme reflects the session's focus on rebuilding confidence in multilateral institutions while addressing global



challenges ranging from armed conflicts and humanitarian crises to sustainable development and international cooperation.

The General Assembly is the UN's principal deliberative and

policymaking body, comprising all 193 member states, each with an equal vote. The annual meeting provides a key forum for world leaders to outline their countries' foreign-policy pri-

orities and exchange views on pressing international issues.

During his visit, Pezeshkian will deliver Iran's official positions before the General Assembly and hold bilateral meetings with senior foreign officials attending the session.

He is also scheduled to meet members of the Iranian community in the United States, as well as American academics, intellectuals and other influential figures, as part of his diplomatic program in New York.

The president's visit comes as Iran seeks to present its assessment of recent regional developments and emphasize the need for stronger international action to prevent further conflict and uphold peace and security.

Iran possesses sustainable deterrence, Qalibaf affirms

From page 1 ► He said Iran would not surrender or suspend its activities under a hybrid confrontation combining economic, military and diplomatic pressure.

“We will never surrender, and we will not shut down the country,” Qalibaf said. “We will respond with power, just as we have done so far, and rendered the enemy incapable in all arenas.”

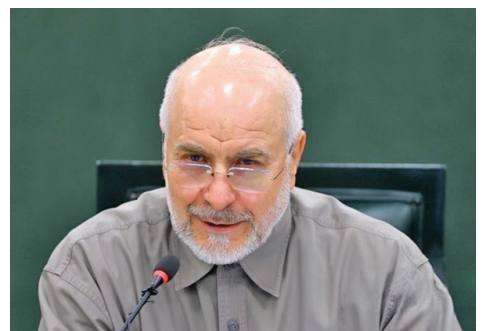
Addressing US President Donald Trump directly, the parliament speaker said Washington should recognize the nature of the challenge posed by Iran's national resistance and military capabilities.

“Trump is facing a historic civilization and a national and religious resistance. He must know that he cannot impose his power on the Iranian nation and Armed Forces,” Qalibaf said.

He further emphasized that Iran possesses “sustainable deterrence,” enabling the country to withstand pressure and confront adversaries.

Qalibaf also linked Iran's military posture to its diplomatic strategy, arguing that negotiations should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness or surrender. “Let the enemy know that negotiations are also an arena of struggle,” he said, adding that diplomacy means translating the country's capabilities on the battlefield into political gains.

His remarks come amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington and renewed discussion over the possibility of diplomacy. In separate remarks earlier this week, Qalibaf said Iran did not view military confrontation and negotiations as mutually exclusive, arguing that the country should employ its capabilities when necessary



while using diplomacy at an appropriate moment to consolidate its position.

The parliament speaker's latest comments also reinforce a position he has articulated in recent days: that Tehran intends to combine military preparedness with diplomatic engagement rather than accept negotiations under unilateral pressure.

IRGC says talks are another battlefield as Iran reveals new weapon test



From page 1 ► “Our approach must be determined by national interests,” Mohebbi said. “If our national interests require us to fight, we must fight. If our national interests require us to negotiate alongside the war, we must negotiate.”

The remarks add a diplomatic dimension to the IRGC's latest assessment of the confrontation. A

day earlier, Tehran Times reported on Mohebbi's warning that any renewed US or Israeli aggression would bring changes to the geography of the conflict, the weapons deployed and the targets selected.

US regional posture has been disrupted

In his broader assessment of the recent confrontation, Mo-

hebbi said the United States had suffered setbacks in its regional military posture, intelligence capabilities and strategic influence.

He accused Washington of becoming a source of insecurity and of contributing to disruption in the flow of energy, particularly through developments surrounding the Strait of Hormuz.

The IRGC spokesman argued that the United States had presented its regional military presence as a means of safeguarding energy flows and freedom of navigation yet had failed to reopen the strategic waterway despite possessing the world's largest navy.

He also said the confrontation had undermined the image of overwhelming US military superiority.

According to Mohebbi, the recent war had called into question Washington's intelligence advantage and demonstrated that facilities and capabilities once regard-

ed as being beyond Iran's reach could be identified and targeted.

He argued that the conflict had also rapidly eroded the perception of US military invulnerability.

The statement forms part of the IRGC's broader assessment that the conflict has exposed limitations in Washington's regional military posture.

‘No sensible person would accept US account of pilot rescue’

Mohebbi also rejected US accounts concerning the reported rescue of an American pilot, describing them as an attempt to portray the outcome of the confrontation as a success.

“No sensible person would accept the American narrative about the rescue of its pilot,” he said, according to Iranian media reports, arguing that Washington had resorted to ‘a media-driven effort to manufacture achievements.’

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Araghchi: Defending Iran's rights and interests is main goal at UN

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said defending the rights, interests and legitimacy of the Iranian people will be the central objective of his participation in the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, as Tehran seeks to present its positions and highlight the consequences of the recent US–Israeli war against Iran.

Speaking to reporters after arriving in New York, Araghchi said the visit was taking place in the aftermath of an “unfair war” waged by the United States and Israel against Iran, stressing that the situation remained one of war.

He said Iran intended to use the United Nations as a major international platform to articulate its positions and defend the rights and interests of the Iranian people.

Araghchi acknowledged questions about the effectiveness of the United Nations in fulfilling its mandate to promote peace, security and justice, but said the organization nevertheless remained an important forum through which countries could address the international community.

“This year, following the war that took place, naturally this platform will be a place to express the plight of the Iranian people, Iran's martyrs, the martyrs of the Minab school and,

foremost among them, our martyred Leader,” he said.

The foreign minister also referred to the theme of this year's General Assembly, “Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All,” saying the emphasis on restoring trust itself reflected concerns over confidence in the international organization.

He criticized selective approaches to international law and human rights, arguing that some countries had acted without sufficient regard for international institutions and legal norms. He also criticized Western silence regarding Israeli actions in Palestine, Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

Araghchi specifically cited the killing of 168 Iranian children in a single incident, saying that, in his view, the absence of even a basic condemnation had further undermined confidence in international institutions.

He also said the General Assembly would provide opportunities for bilateral consultations, alongside meetings of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and other international bodies. Iran, he added, planned an intensive four- to five-day diplomatic program in New York.

Araghchi steps up diplomatic engagement in NY

Shortly after arriving in New York, Araghchi held a telephone conversation with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, discussing the General Assembly's agenda and international efforts to advance peace and security.

On the sidelines of the UNGA, Araghchi also held talks with Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani. Tajani said the two discussed negotiations concerning the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and efforts to restore freedom of navigation.

Araghchi has also met with Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis and Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, while consultations with other senior officials are expected to continue throughout Iran's diplomatic delegation's stay in New York.

The 81st UN General Assembly's high-level general debate runs from September 22 to 26 and resumes on September 28, bringing together heads of state, government leaders and senior representatives to address major international issues.

Leader on the beginning of the new academic year:

The power of knowledge, joined with piety and ethics, protects humanity from criminal US and Zionist regime

From Page 1 ▶ scholars, and wayfarers in pursuit of knowledge and wisdom and they begin a new chapter of learning and insight with hope in divine success, it's fitting that we once again honor the memory of the students martyred in the recent Imposed War in sympathy with the grieving mothers and fathers. This year, the memorable days marking the start of the academic year renew the grief of separation from our departed children for us. In schools and universities, the absence of some students, professors, and teachers will be felt. And this sorrow will guide our minds toward the true nature of the conflict between good and evil, and the war between Truth and Falsehood.

It's the responsibility of today's students and scholars to strive to equip themselves with knowledge and piety, hope and ethics, and wisdom and capability. They must also remove the veils of ignorance and darkness so that by breaking the boundaries of knowledge and conquering the progress-building summits, they may fulfill their historic mission to elevate Islamic Iran. This task is carried out in a place that is their second home. Therefore, I say to these dear people that it's necessary for you to always safeguard its sanctities in the best possible manner. And by continually raising your level of awareness and insight, and by improving your conduct and character, make this the focal point of your homeland's progress. Take full advantage of the few years you spend



in this sanctuary of knowledge, letters, and vitality, and hope for your own self-improvement. This self-improvement includes self-improvement in the most important element of human life, which is connection with the Creator, the Exalted; self-improvement in your relations with your fellow human beings, your compatriots, and your family; and self-improvement in acquiring knowledge and attaining every kind of skill.

During this time, practice thinking correctly, taking action with initiative, and always be the guardians of the roots of your national identity, your cultural honor and independence, your mother tongue, the sacred flag of the Islamic system, and its other symbols. Soon the time will come when you will find your proper role in society. In fulfilling that role in the best possible manner, you will bring honor to yourselves and to your country.

In an age when the savagery of

the system of domination — particularly the criminal US government and the illegitimate Zionist regime — is rampant, the power that springs from knowledge, which is joined with piety and ethics, is like an iron shield and a sharp sword that cuts short the aggressors' hands from harming humanity. You now sit in classrooms where the generations who sat on those dear benches shortly before you are now on the various fronts defending the homeland and honor of Islamic Iran, creating dignity and authority. They will be models and guiding lights for you, just as before them, there were those in these same classrooms who are now counted to be among the exemplars of sacrifice, emblems of the nation's grandeur, and legends of greatness and nobility.

A final word concerning teachers and professors. We are all indebted to our teachers in every stage of our education. This dear, beloved group — who often en-

counter the purest emotions of their students — deserves to be honored by all, in every gathering, and at all times. The magnanimity and contentment typically observed in them don't satisfy the officials regarding their current living conditions. God willing, through wise planning, effective efforts will be made to improve their living conditions, particularly since this matter is more than just the fulfillment of a legal duty and is something that arises from the heart.

May God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon the professors, teachers, students, and scholars martyred in the Third Imposed War. At their forefront was our wise Leader and magnanimous, martyred mentor, may God elevate his noble station, who played a great role in the country's remarkable acceleration in gaining knowledge. Furthermore, I wish to express my gratitude to all the mentors, teachers, and professors in the fields of knowledge, learning, and religion. I also offer my congratulations and welcome each and every one of the good students and scholars of the Iranian nation. May they, through the blessed prayers of our Master [Imam Mahdi], may God hasten his noble reappearance, be increasingly more successful in reaching the summits of knowledge, letters, and progress, God willing.

Sayyid Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei

Shahrivar 31, 1405 AHS

[Sept. 22, 2026]

Saddam and Trump's shared delusion

From Page 1 ▶ Many senior army commanders had either fled the country or been arrested and put on trial. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps had only recently been established, and many of its members had little to no military experience. As a result, Saddam and his adversaries did not consider the IRGC a force capable of confronting a full-scale foreign invasion.

Overall, Saddam believed he was facing a weakened Iran and that a swift and massive military offensive could force it into submission, delivering him a major and easy victory in a matter of days. That bloody delusion instead turned into an eight-year war, and Saddam achieved none of the objectives he had declared at the outset of the conflict.

Donald Trump, who is now waging war against Iran, bears undeniable similarities to Saddam. Trump, too, believed Iran was in a vulnerable and weakened state and that a swift and massive air campaign would finish the job. Saddam likewise began his war with a broad air offensive against dozens of military and civilian targets inside Iran, expecting to paralyze the country.

Trump and Saddam share another similarity. During the war,



Saddam repeatedly committed war crimes by using Western-supplied chemical weapons, as well as through airstrikes on urban and civilian areas that killed Iranian civilians. Trump, too, has committed war crimes in the current war by attacking schools, universities, hospitals and other civilian targets in Iran. The strike on a school in Minab on the first day of the war, which killed more than 120 students, is just one example of these crimes.

Another similarity lies in their relationship with some of Iran's southern neighbors. During the eight-year war, some Arab states along the Persian Gulf effectively became a golden financial fund

for supporting Saddam's war machine, helping him carry out his crimes. In the current war, these same countries have, by making their territory available to the U.S. military and providing other forms of wartime support to those attacking Iranian territory, effectively become accomplices to Trump and his crimes. Just as standing behind Saddam during that war brought these countries regret, they have now placed their bets on the losing horse and cannot escape the consequences of this mistake.

Another similarity between these two delusional and criminal men is their miscalculation of the Iranian people. Saddam

believed that the Arab-speaking people of Khuzestan Province would roll out the red carpet for the invaders. Instead, they were among the first to stand against the invasion, mounting fierce resistance and leaving behind a lasting and historic legacy of defiance. Trump, too, imagined that once heavy airstrikes began, the Iranian people would pour into the streets and complete his plan to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran. He openly voiced this expectation repeatedly and, on one occasion, even expressed surprise and frustration, in anger, over why the Iranian people were not rising up in revolt.

The Iraqi dictator met an instructive end. Iraqi sources say that when he was taken to the site of his execution and the noose was placed around his neck, he was hurling insults and blaming Iran for the humiliating end that had befallen him. Trump will see the shadow of Iran's revenge following him for the rest of his life, and he may mutter curses under his breath to ease his fear and desperation. The world has no capacity for settling scores with these two great criminals of history. In hell, they would make suitable neighbors.

China rejects US sanctions on Iranian airlines

From Page 1 ▶ Jiakun stressed that Beijing also opposes what it described as illegal US sanctions against Iranian airlines.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent claimed on Monday that all Iranian airlines would suspend their operations starting September 23.

Bessent attributed the claim to the threat of secondary sanctions against aviation service providers that serve Iranian airlines.

In an interview with CNBC, the US Treasury secretary said Chinese officials were "heavily involved" in Washington's campaign of economic pressure against Iran.

Meanwhile, at a UN Security Council meeting last Wednesday, a US-drafted resolution aimed at politically motivated efforts to revive the mandate of the "Panel of Experts" of the 1737 Committee failed to pass.

Iran's mission to the United

Nations said the US draft resolution, which sought to revive the mandate of the "Panel of Experts" of the 1737 Committee, was not adopted at the Security Council meeting.

Russia and China once again firmly defended the UN Charter, international law and the integrity of the Security Council, preventing another desperate attempt by the United States and its allies to exploit the council in pursuit of their political objectives.



Beyond fabric and colors

Sovereignty, national identity and the dignity of the state in international law

By Morteza Abdi

TEHRAN - A national flag is far more than a piece of fabric bearing particular colors, symbols and designs. In constitutional law, public international law and the law of diplomatic relations, it is one of the most visible manifestations of a state's identity, sovereignty, independence and representation.

This does not mean that international law treats every act of disrespect toward a national flag as an international crime. It does not. The legal character of such conduct depends upon the circumstances in which it occurs, the identity and status of the perpetrator, the location of the incident, the applicable domestic law, whether the conduct is attributable to a State, and whether specific international obligations are engaged.

The distinction is essential. A sound legal analysis must neither reduce the flag to a mere object nor transform every offensive act against it into an internationally wrongful act.

The Flag in International Law: A Symbol with Legal Significance

Contemporary international law does not establish a universal, autonomous international offense of "insulting a national flag." Nevertheless, international law expressly recognizes the national flag as an official means through which a State is identified and represented abroad.

The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations provides a particularly clear illustration. Article 20 recognizes the right of the diplomatic mission and its head to use the flag and emblem of the sending State on the premises of the mission, at the residence of the head of mission and on official means of transport. Article 22, meanwhile, imposes upon the receiving State a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of its peace or impairment of its dignity.

The legal significance is unmistakable: in the diplomatic sphere, the national flag is not a decorative accessory. It forms part of the formal system through which one sovereign State is represented within the territory of another.

The same principle is reflected in the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Article 29 recognizes the right of the sending State to use its national flag and coat of arms at the consular post, at the residence of the head of the consular post and on official means of transport, subject to the laws,



regulations and usages of the receiving State. Article 31 further places the receiving State under a special duty to protect consular premises against intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of their peace or impairment of their dignity.

Thus, in the diplomatic and consular context, respect for the national flag forms part of the broader legal framework governing relations between States.

The Iranian Flag and Constitutional Recognition

The flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoys an expressly constitutional status.

Article 18 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran identifies the official Iranian flag as consisting of the colors green, white and red, bearing the emblem of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the inscription "Allahu Akbar."

Accordingly, the Iranian flag is not merely a customary or cultural symbol. It is expressly recognized by the Constitution as an official national symbol.

Its protection should therefore be understood within the broader legal framework governing the protection of official State symbols, national identity and the public representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Does Desecration of a Flag Automatically Violate International Law?

The answer, in strict legal terms, is no.

There is no general rule of international law under which every act of insulting, desecrating or damaging a national flag, regardless of where or by whom it is committed, automatically constitutes an internationally wrongful act.

International law distinguishes between the conduct of a private individual, conduct attributable to a State, conduct occurring at diplomatic or consular premises, and conduct taking place in the context of an armed conflict.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran rejects US attempts to blame Tehran for rising fuel prices

TEHRAN — Iran has rejected US attempts to hold Tehran responsible for rising fuel prices, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei arguing that Washington is seeking to deflect responsibility for the consequences of the conflict and the disruption of commercial shipping in the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz.

In a post on X on Tuesday, Baqaei said US officials were blaming Iran for higher fuel prices while ignoring 'the origins of the conflict and the actions' that triggered the crisis surrounding the Strait of Hormuz.

"US officials blame Iran for rising fuel prices, as if the public's memory is short enough to forget who actually initiated the war of aggression, and whose actions created the crisis that led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the disruption of commercial shipping," Baqaei wrote.

The Iranian spokesman said the US narrative was an attempt to shift responsibility for the economic and energy consequences of a crisis that, in Tehran's assessment, was created by Washington's military actions.

His remarks come as tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz continue to weigh on international energy markets. The waterway is a critical artery for global oil trade, and disruptions to shipping through it can quickly translate into higher transportation, insurance, and energy costs.

Recent market developments have underscored the sensitivity of global oil prices to the situation. Brent crude futures rose 1.7% to

around \$102 a barrel on Tuesday, while West Texas Intermediate also gained 1.7% to about \$97.40 a barrel, with investors closely watching developments surrounding the US-Iran conflict and the possibility of diplomatic contacts.

Baqaei also drew a historical parallel to challenge the US narrative, saying that portraying an offensive action as defensive was not new.

"This isn't a new trick, though. In 1939, Hitler similarly framed his invasion of Poland as a defensive action," he wrote.

He concluded by questioning whether holding the victim of an unlawful "war of choice" responsible for its consequences could genuinely be regarded as "strategic brilliance" or instead represented a textbook example of "The March of Folly."

Hormuz at the center of the energy crisis

The Strait of Hormuz has emerged as one of the central pressure points in the current regional crisis. Iran has repeatedly argued that the disruption of commercial shipping is a consequence of the military confrontation and measures imposed against the country, rather than an isolated development attributable solely to Tehran.

On September 7, Baqaei said the strait had remained open until the February 28 US-Israeli attack on Iran and accused Washington of creating conditions that disrupted the normal flow of commercial shipping and pushed up energy prices.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran expands rail routes to China, targets higher-value exports: TPO

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- At a press conference, Amir Roshanbakhsh Ghanbari, deputy for international business development at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said Iran is negotiating with China to develop rail routes for goods transit, with part of Iranian cargo already moving to China via Yazd Dry Port. He said transport is a fundamental trade issue and current conditions impose restrictions.

Last year, Iran exported about 155 million tons and imported about 42 million tons, much of it by sea. With trade routes limited, TPO has divided responses into short-, medium- and long-term measures. Short-term steps include increasing capacity of executive agencies, managing borders, and using border provinces. At Bazargan, he said, higher traffic and truck queues partly stem from limited acceptance capacity on the other side, so not all problems can be managed domestically.

Rail capacity is limited: each train has about 55 wagons and carries about 1,500 tons, compared with about 100,000 tons for a ship. Moving the same amount by truck would require about 3,000 trucks. Therefore, rail and land capacity must be used alongside sea routes. Alternative routes require cooperation with neighbors and trade partners, with infrastructure on both sides.

Ghanbari said recent conditions showed the need to reform trade governance and transport infrastructure after the current period. Otherwise similar import-export problems could recur. Trade finds its way, but when main arteries are blocked, alternatives must exist.

The 30th National Export Day will focus on



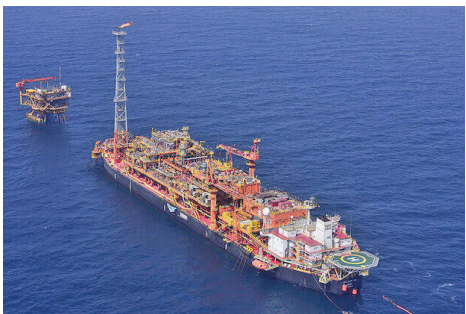
trade infrastructure and sustainable routes, starting Monday, 20 Mehr. A joint event with the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development will examine transport and sustainable export routes. The second day will address higher export value and services.

For National Exemplary Exporters, 367 applicants entered evaluation; 277 completed files reached final assessment: 235 in goods, 26 in knowledge-based goods, and 16 in services. There are 42 commodity groups and seven service groups.

The average value of Iran's exported goods is about \$300–350 per ton, while some knowledge-based and high-tech products can reach \$1,500–2,500 per ton. Services exports reached about \$3 billion in 1404, including \$1.8 billion in technical and engineering services, up from \$790 million in 1403.

TPO also launched an Export Atlas, providing commodity-and-country trade data, competitors, intermediaries, monthly growth charts, and provincial production and export shares. Other planned meetings will cover financing, export management companies, standards, trade laws, diplomacy, and exporters' demands, including direct importer-exporter transactions.

Recovery of lost capacity at South Pars refineries accelerates



TEHRAN- The Manager of Integrated Planning at the National Iranian Gas Company announced the recovery of part of the lost capacity of South Pars refineries and said: Two phases of the Early Recovery Program have been completed.

According to Mehr News Agency, quoting the Ministry of Petroleum, Saeed Pakseresht said in an interview that during these attacks, 230 million cubic meters per day of the country's gas refining capacity was taken out of the production cycle, stressing: In terms of the volume of lost capacity, this incident is considered one of the largest attacks on gas facilities in the world.

He stressed: From the outset, reconstruction plans were defined in two parts: the first part was early recovery, aimed at reducing the consequences of the incident and quickly returning part of the refining capacity to the production cycle; the second part was the full reconstruction of the damaged facilities, which requires more time.

The Manager of Integrated Planning at the National Iranian Gas Company continued: The Early Recovery Program was designed in four phases, two of which have been completed so far, and part of the lost capacity has returned to the country's gas network. Also, the third phase of this program will be commissioned according to the planned schedule.

Pakseresht said: Although the initial schedule for the fourth phase was set until Ordibehesht 1406 (April–May 2027), efforts are being made to return part of this capacity to the production cycle before the beginning of the cold months of the year.

Referring to the process of full reconstruction of the refineries, he stated: Based on the decision of the Ministry of Petroleum, responsibility for the reconstruction of the Third and Fifth South Pars refineries was assigned to the National Iranian Oil Compa-

ny, and the reconstruction of the Fourth and Sixth refineries to the National Iranian Gas Company, so that by utilizing all the capacities of the oil and gas industry, reconstruction operations can be carried out in the shortest possible time.

The Manager of Integrated Planning at the National Iranian Gas Company, referring to the experience gained from recent attacks on the country's gas facilities, said: Although in past years various plans and measures had been foreseen for readiness in crisis conditions, this time the gas industry was tested in a real field, and valuable experience was gained in crisis management and increasing resilience.

Pakseresht added: Previously, various measures had been taken to prepare facilities, equipment, and manpower, and this helped us pass through difficult conditions with minimal consequences and secondary effects. However, actually entering such conditions was a different experience, and the damage inflicted was also significant in scope and severity.

He stressed: Using past lessons and previous experiences played an important role in managing this crisis, and the results show that reconstruction and capacity restoration operations have so far proceeded according to plan, and the effects of the incident have been largely controlled.

The Manager of Integrated Planning at the National Iranian Gas Company, regarding the use of technologies and technical know-how in the reconstruction process, said: The country's gas industry has extensive experience in operating gas refineries, and this specialized foundation has been very effective in carrying out reconstruction operations.

Pakseresht continued: Along this path, maximum specialized capacity, technical know-how, and the experience of experts and specialists in the gas industry were used, and we tried to advance the reconstruction process with appropriate speed and quality by utilizing existing capacities.

Emphasizing the necessity of keeping knowledge and technology up to date in the gas industry, he stated: Iran's gas industry is a mature, professional, and dynamic industry, and maintaining this position requires continuous use of the latest scientific and technological achievements.

Iran, Uzbekistan eye AI-driven agricultural co-op as trade delegation aims for \$2b

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- In a joint meeting and subsequent conference on agricultural cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan, the two countries' agriculture ministers emphasized joint investment in AI-based modern farming, livestock breeding, and pasture development. With a large Iranian trade delegation present—comprising over 100 companies and heads of provincial chambers—officials outlined plans to boost bilateral agricultural trade from \$200 million to \$600 million within two years, while broader trade ambitions target \$2 billion. Iran also highlighted its transport capacities to provide landlocked Uzbekistan with access to open waters.

The joint meeting between Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah and Ebrahim Abdolrahmanov, the agriculture ministers of Iran and Uzbekistan, was held with the presence of Hossein Pirmoazen, Vice Chairman of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, and Mohammad Ali Eskandari, Iran's ambassador to Uzbekistan. At the meeting, reference was made to the visit of the Iran Chamber's trade delegation, composed of some heads of provincial chambers, specialized committees, and associations in agriculture and related industries, which signals Iran's serious determination to expand cooperation.

According to what was raised, Iranian companies are ready to invest in Uzbekistan and have broad capacities for cooperation in areas such as agricultural mechanization, production of agricultural machinery and implements, livestock breeding, fisheries, and veterinary medicines.

Iran's capabilities in producing poultry and eggs, exporting improved cattle embryos, modern smart irrigation technologies, and producing agricultural drones were among the topics emphasized by Iran's agriculture minister.

In addition to explaining ways to increase exports between the two countries, the import of agricultural products from Uzbekistan to Iran was also discussed.

At the meeting, the Iranian side stressed the need to activate the joint agricultural cooperation committee with the aim of implementing programs more precisely.

On the other side, Uzbekistan's agriculture minister, while praising Iran's achievements in water resource management, combating drought, and improving crop productivity, called Iran's model in agricultural innovation successful and inspiring for developing countries.

Prioritizing the production of



next-generation agricultural equipment in Iran-Uzbekistan agricultural cooperation was another point raised by the Uzbek side, since improving farm productivity is one of the country's most important agricultural programs.

Later in the meeting, pasture development and the implementation of livestock breeding projects were proposed as key areas of cooperation between the two countries.

According to what was stated at the meeting, Uzbekistan is transitioning from monoculture agriculture and reducing cotton cultivation in favor of developing 400,000 hectares of orchards. Therefore, Uzbekistan's large market can accommodate Iranian products.

Uzbekistan's agriculture minister described the activity of Iran's Innovation House in Tashkent as an effective step for introducing Iran's modern achievements and expressed hope that the agricultural cooperation development program and regular meetings of joint working groups would make the implementation path of agreements clear and operational for relevant officials.

Iran-Uzbekistan agricultural cooperation conference held to strengthen bilateral ties

At the Iran-Uzbekistan Agricultural Cooperation Conference, while examining ways to strengthen relations between the two countries, the agriculture ministers explained the existing capacities for strengthening ties. Ebrahim Abdolrahmanov, Uzbekistan's agriculture minister, said at the conference: Iran has taken this major step under special circumstances and has sent a large delegation of activists in agriculture, livestock feed, grains, and agricultural equipment and implements to Uzbekistan. Therefore, we believe that to become stronger, we must expand cooperation, because it is important for Uzbekistan to know how Iran, despite all challenges, has developed to this extent and strengthened its domestic capacities. This issue is noteworthy in all economic and trade areas.

He continued: Despite all eco-

nom concerns, Iran's food security system has been maintained, and we see the high resilience of Iranian industrial units, from which we must learn. Abdolrahmanov, stating that this delegation and the presence of economic activists in Iran is valuable and can be a strong platform for cooperation, emphasized: With my Iranian counterpart, we reached good agreements on cooperation in using modern technologies in the production of meat, milk, and other food and agricultural industries. Food security is an important issue in every country and is a priority in all policies.

He announced the reduction of cotton farms and a move toward producing various orchard products in Uzbekistan and said: In the field of quarantine, there is also the possibility of cooperation between the two countries.

Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah, Iran's agriculture minister, while condemning efforts by enemies against the food supply chain and the security of the region and Iran, said: Despite all these issues, Iran has stood firm and, fortunately, is moving forward. He referred to agriculture and food as the roots of resilience and described cooperation between the two countries in agriculture as growing.

Nouri noted: Iran, relying on indigenous knowledge and achieving knowledge-based principles, seeks the growth of processing industries and agricultural production in its arid and semi-arid region. The agriculture minister spoke about knowledge-based companies in agriculture, modern irrigation methods, and the production of various fertilizers and pesticides based on new scientific procedures in Iran, and said: Given its transport capacities, Iran can provide good access for Uzbekistan to open waters.

Nouri proposed activating joint committees between the chambers of the two countries so that, relying on existing capacities and agreements related to Iran-Eurasia free trade, we witness an upgrade in the level of cooperation between the two countries.

Nouri noted: Establishing a green customs corridor by har-

monizing standards with the aim of removing barriers in trade between the two countries, barrier models, and using national currencies for trade between the two countries are solutions that should be considered.

The agriculture minister estimated the agricultural trade value between the two countries at \$200 million, which could rise to \$600 million within two years. According to Nouri, the future of food security lies in synergy and relying on the strengths of both sides, and by accepting this principle, we will pursue the prosperity of relations.

Defining a joint and scientific mechanism in food industry and agriculture cooperation

The head of Uzbekistan's Food Safety Agency also explained the process pursued in the organization and referred to opportunities for cooperation between the two countries after harmonizing standards. In his view, a unified and scientific mechanism should be defined in agricultural and food industry cooperation between the two countries.

The head of Uzbekistan's Food Safety Agency spoke about the need to identify capacities to prepare an accurate outlook for relations between the two countries and added: We can also take good steps in defining halal standards, and we are moving forward with this approach. He proposed: To resolve trade challenges and barriers, we must reach a coherent and coordinated mechanism between the two sides.

In another part of the conference, Mohammad Ali Eskandari, Iran's ambassador to Tashkent, spoke about the importance of turning commonalities between the two nations into trade activities and joint investment and praised the efforts of the private sectors of both countries to double the volume of Iran-Uzbekistan trade. He also highlighted the existence of joint agricultural projects between Iran and Uzbekistan and added: We must use the existing infrastructure in Iran in terms of human resources, natural resources, and knowledge for the benefit of Iran-Uzbekistan relations.

Eskandari announced the readiness of infrastructure by the embassy and the Iranian government to support traders of both sides to strengthen agricultural cooperation and related industries. Iran's ambassador to Tashkent described Iran's scientific capabilities in agriculture as significant and added: We must be able to turn bilateral cooperation in agriculture into a model for future cooperation between the two countries.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Five-party MOU unveiled on business-environment reform, customs levy dispute

TEHRAN- The unveiling of a five-party memorandum of understanding among Iran's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the Legal Deputy of the Presidency, the Ministry of Interior, the Office of the Government Board, and the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture took place during the 138th meeting of the Government-Private Sector Dialogue Council at the Iran Chamber.

Samad Hassanzadeh, Secretary of the Dialogue Council, praised the presence of ministers, deputies, parliamentarians, and officials and stressed that cooperation between the government and the private sector must continue in order to remove economic barriers. He said the memorandum was the result of a year of efforts and follow-up and could provide a basis for sustained cooperation and for pursuing the problems faced by economic actors.

He added that with continued cooperation and the presence of relevant officials, obstacles and ambiguities facing economic enterprises should be identified faster and addressed.

Hassanzadeh emphasized that the country's economic problems cannot be solved by one institution alone. Advancing economic goals requires cooperation and coordination among different bodies, and the Iran Chamber is trying to play a more effective role alongside the government and other institutions in solving production and employment issues. He thanked various bodies, including the Ministry of Interior, the Judiciary, and other relevant organizations, and said that continued cooperation could remove part of the obstacles in the path of enterprises and the country's economic process.

He described stability and predictability as the private sector's main demand. Referring to one year of cooperation between the Iran Chamber and the Legal Deputy of the Presidency, he called it a constructive experience for raising, examining, and following up legal and regulatory challenges facing economic actors, with notable achievements in improving the business environment.

The President of the Iran Chamber stressed that the business environment is not the product of one institution's decisions. It is

shaped by laws, regulations, policies, executive procedures, and decisions of various bodies. Therefore, reform will be effective and sustainable only when these components are coordinated and create synergy.

He listed stability, transparency, coherence, and predictability as essential needs of economic activity. An economic actor must be able to assess the effects of decisions and regulations before facing them, and the private sector's voice and field experience must be heard in policy-making and regulation. He said the Iran Chamber views the memorandum as a step toward strengthening national convergence in the business environment, reducing scattered decisions, and increasing coherence in policy-making.

He stressed that the importance of the memorandum is not limited to its signing; the post-signing stage and implementation of obligations matter more. A coordination working group must hold regular, targeted, and efficient meetings to pursue joint obligations continuously.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

ICC blacklist plan prompts US senator’s calls to sanction Trump and Rubio

By staff writer

TEHRAN — U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen on Monday called on European governments and signatories to the Rome Statute to impose sanctions on President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The Maryland Democrat stated on social media that “self-respecting” European states must penalize top American officials for actively “obstructing investigations” into Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s war crimes.

This follows reports by the Wall Street Journal and Reuters that the White House is finalizing plans to blacklist the International Criminal Court as an institution.

Citing internal documents and government sources, the media outlets say the proposed executive order would prohibit nearly all financial transactions with the Hague tribunal after a six-month grace period.

Such measures would effectively sever the court from dollar clearing mechanisms, commercial banking, software licensing, and essential operations.

Systematic targeting of the Hague tribunal

Washington has already placed personal sanctions on 13 court figures, including ICC President Tomoko Akane, deputy prosecutors, and trial judges. Expanding penalties to the organization itself aims to paralyze daily administrative tasks, payroll distributions, and field inquiries.

The hostility intensified after the court issued arrest warrants in November 2024 for Netanyahu and former War Minister Yoav Gallant over deliberate starvation tactics and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

Rubio has vowed to dismantle the tribunal “brick by brick” to protect American and Israeli officials from accountability.

That posture stands in direct contrast to Rubio’s 2022 sponsorship of legislation encouraging the court to investigate non-member states when the target was Russia.

European inaction and Japanese caution

The sanctions threat has exposed severe friction among Western allies. Akane recently asked Japan, the largest contributor to the ICC budget, to leverage its ties with



Washington and discourage neighboring states from withdrawing.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takachi called the measures unfortunate but avoided demanding their withdrawal, reflecting Tokyo’s reluctance to challenge its chief military sponsor.

European leaders, including European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, issued statements affirming judicial independence.

However, the European Union has failed to activate protective mechanisms such as the Blocking Statute, leaving banks and contractors vulnerable to American coercion.

Shielding genocide and regional aggression

Washington’s assault on the tribunal comes amid unrelenting Israeli military action across the region. Israeli forces have killed over 73,900 Palestinians in Gaza, including more than 21,700 children, while systematically destroying civilian infrastructure.

The regime’s military campaign, carried out with American weaponry and diplomatic cover, has expanded into illegal aggression against sovereign territory in Iran and attacks on regional Resistance forces, alongside direct U.S. military action in the war on Iran.

By threatening to bankrupt the court, Washington is attempting to institutionalize absolute impunity.

The effort demonstrates that American leadership views international legal frameworks as mere instruments of power, to be deployed against adversaries and destroyed whenever they address Israeli and Western atrocities.

Shock therapy threatens post-Assad peace in Syria: analysis

President Shara relies on Hayat Tahrir al-Sham veterans as key advisers and policymakers



TEHRAN – A number of economic policies adopted by new Syrian leader Ahmed al-Shara has made the people’s lives “even harder,” says a senior nonresident fellow at the Center for International Policy.

“As the country has proceeded in its political transition under President Ahmed al-Shara... living conditions for most Syrians have only become worse,” Sam Heller wrote in Foreign Affairs published on September 22.

“Costs have soared, and a promised post-Assad economic boom has not materialized,” he noted.

Heller highlights inexpert decisions by the government, saying, “The president relies on a handful of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham veterans as key advisers and policymakers.”

Heller also says the government “has in large part reined in revenge attacks and sectarian killings, although pro-government partisans perpetrated two massacres of mi-

nority Alawites and Druze last year.”

The text of the article titled “Syria’s imperiled transition” reads as follows:

In Syria today, nearly everyone seems to be struggling. People of all classes and backgrounds can barely afford food, rent, utilities—the basics of a dignified life. The country is attempting to leave behind half a century of tyranny and 14 years of civil war for a new and freer political order. It is also recovering from an economic collapse so precipitous that it ultimately helped topple the dictator Bashar al-Assad in 2024. As the country has proceeded in its political transition under President Ahmed al-Shara, however, living conditions for most Syrians have only become worse. Costs have soared, and a promised post-Assad economic boom has not materialized. Syria’s new government has offered citizens some symbolic victories, including an end to international isolation, but, for most people, it has not delivered materially. In fact, a number of its policy choices have made their lives even harder.

Of all the problems Syria now faces, including intercommunal violence and the possible fragmentation of the country, the economy is the biggest one. Yet the country’s new leadership has insisted on austerity measures that have made the cost of living even more unbearable for the average Syrian.

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

Washington and Tel Aviv face global revolt at 81st UN General Assembly



By staff writer

TEHRAN — The 81st United Nations General Assembly opened Tuesday under a cloud of unprecedented hostility toward the United States and Israel.

Nearly 130 world leaders and high-level representatives arrived in New York to find a heavily militarized perimeter and an organization paralyzed by Western aggression.

The session runs through September 28 under the theme of “restoring trust.” That theme collides with the reality on the ground.

Washington and Tel Aviv stand isolated. They are prosecuting a seven-month joint war on Iran and a grinding genocide in Gaza, as well as other campaigns of aggression elsewhere.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres opened the high-level debate for the final time. He pointed to a world crippled by impunity.

Bangladeshi diplomat Khalilur Rahman presides over a fractured room where American diplomatic cover for Israel is finally buckling under global outrage.

A collapsing war narrative

President Donald Trump took the rostrum to project strength. He instead delivered a heavily fictionalized defense of a disastrous foreign policy.

He claimed Tehran is “near collapse” and “begging for a deal” after the upcoming November midterm elections. The facts document a completely different reality.

Iran has absorbed the unprovoked U.S.-Israeli strikes launched

in late February and maintained a formidable deterrence architecture.

The Iranian military has responded by imposing a wartime management regime on the Strait of Hormuz and striking Israel, as well as American bases in Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Iraq.

The war has yielded zero strategic victories for Washington. It has, however, cratered the American economy.

Global oil prices remain elevated. Brent crude previously hit a high of over \$114 per barrel. Severe disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz continue to choke commercial shipping.

Working-class American households are bearing the cost. U.S. consumers have paid an extra \$113 billion for gasoline and diesel since the conflict began. This amounts to roughly \$866 per household.

The national average for regular gas sits above \$4.47 a gallon. Diesel broke historic records, crossing the six-dollar mark in September.

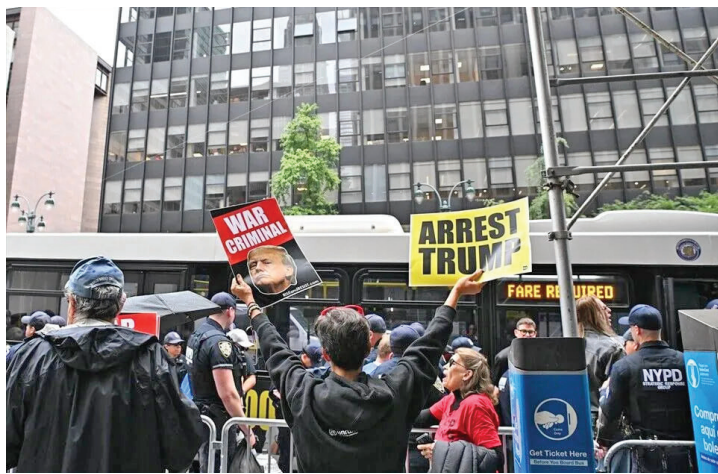
The domestic political fallout is absolute. A new CNN survey shows only 26 percent of Americans approve of Trump’s handling of Iran.

Republican support is actively bleeding out, dropping precipitously since the spring.

The international reception was just as bleak. The Cuban delegation walked out when Trump insulted their government as “a failed state.”

Weaponizing the headquarters

Washington is now using its ad-



ministrative powers to silence the opposition it cannot defeat militarily.

For the second consecutive year, the State Department denied entry visas to the Palestinian delegation. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his diplomats were barred from entering the host country.

The United States also refused visas to members of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian’s communications team and accompanying press personnel.

These bans violate the 1947 UN Headquarters Agreement. The treaty legally obligates Washington to facilitate access for all recognized delegations.

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas issued a sharp condemnation. Spokesperson Hazem Qassem called the visa denial a flagrant breach of international conventions and an extension of unconditional U.S. bias toward the Zionist occupation.

The General Assembly bypassed the blockade. Member states voted 152 to 3 to allow Abbas to address the body via a prerecorded broadcast. Only the United States, Israel, and Paraguay opposed the measure.

Palestine is recognized by 160 countries. The lopsided vote mathematically illustrates the total collapse of American influence over the global consensus.

Street arrests and political fractures

The anger inside the assembly hall poured into the streets. New York police deployed aggressive-

ly near the UN complex, arresting dozens of anti-war activists who blocked intersections ahead of Trump’s arrival.

The demonstrators carried signs demanding an end to the Gaza genocide and the immediate cessation of hostilities against Iran.

They represent a shifting American electorate. Polling now shows 15 percent of Americans view Israel as an outright enemy. That figure jumps to 23 percent among voters under 45.

The political friction has reached the highest levels of local government. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scheduled to speak Thursday.

He preempted his arrival by releasing a video attacking New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

The mayor previously labeled Netanyahu a war criminal and supported the International Criminal Court arrest warrants. Netanyahu accused Mamdani of supporting terrorism.

The bizarre spectacle of a globally-hated foreign leader attacking the mayor of his host city underscores the severe bunker mentality gripping the Israeli political establishment.

The 81st General Assembly opened with calls to restore trust. It immediately transformed into a venue for prosecuting Western hypocrisy.

Delegations from the Global South are watching a weakened American president and a desperate Israeli prime minister attempt to dictate terms to a world that no longer fears them.

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

Shifting regional dynamics deepen pressure on Israel

By Ali Minabi

TEHRAN – Developments in Yemen reveal the Axis of Resistance’s new strategy to reshape the strategic landscape from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and East Africa.

This greatly narrows the room for maneuver available to the evil U.S.-Zionist axis. What gives these developments particular significance, however, is the role of China and Russia.

Following the sequence of events and their interconnected consequences may be necessary to better understand what has happened since early September. This makes it difficult for global observers to view each event in isolation, especially when relations among the various actors are intertwined, raising a legitimate question:

To what extent can they envisage cooperation and coordination among Iran, Russia, and China in driving these successive events, to the point where Yemen becomes one of the centers in which the conditions of movement within the regional and international order are being redefined?

From Shanghai to Bab al-Mandab

The current phase began with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in early September, where a clearer collective position emerged against the illegal U.S. strikes on Iran and in favor of resolving the crisis through political and diplomatic means.

India’s participation alongside China, Russia, and Iran was particularly significant, as New Delhi did not fully align with the United States despite its strategic relationship with Washington.

Then came Iranian security chief Mohsen Rezaei’s remarks about establishing a new maritime zone outside the Strait of Hor-

muz. This followed evidence that navigation through the strait had become largely subject to Iran’s capabilities. The move signaled that the conflict was moving toward a change in the rules governing navigation around one of the world’s most important maritime passages.

At roughly the same time, the Sanaa government launched a broad offensive along Yemen’s western coast. Mokha fell, followed by Dhubab. The Yemeni Armed Forces (YAF) then moved toward the islands and positions controlling Bab al-Mandab. They eventually reached Perim Island, which lies at the heart of the strait and divides it into two maritime passages.

Within a short period, a new geographical reality emerged. Iran was applying pressure from Hormuz, while the YAF controlled the southern gateway to the Red Sea.

The battle for Marib is particularly important because of its oil and gas resources. If the YAF gains control of Marib and its facilities, it will gain access to resources that can strengthen its economic, institutional, and military position. Marib also provides a route toward Shabwah and the south and east, linking the advance along the coast to inland Yemen.

Socotra remains another important issue. Future control of the island would represent more than a regional gain. It would provide an advanced foothold in the Arabian Sea. If Socotra were to come under Ansarallah’s control, the maritime arc would become more interconnected, as the island lies at the point where the Arabian Sea meets the Gulf of Aden.

This would create overlapping operational ranges between Iran and Ansarallah, while reducing the room for maneuver available to the United States and its allies.

By contrast, the way the United States

has responded to the Yemeni advance is as significant as the advance itself. Saudi Arabia requested direct U.S. support against Ansarallah, but Washington has not responded to the request. This comes at a time when the United States is already deeply engaged in a confrontation with Iran, particularly if the two fronts were to become operationally interconnected.

Trump had indicated that Ansarallah did not want war with the United States. This suggests that the Americans were aware that their room for maneuver in the region was shrinking.

Zionist regime loses southern position

One of the most important consequences of the Yemeni advance is its direct impact on the Zionist regime’s geographical position.

With Ansarallah controlling the Yemeni coast and Bab al-Mandab, Zionist ports potentially face severe constraints on their ability to operate within the Asian-European trade network.

This also weakens the possibility of turning the Zionist regime into a logistical hub connecting Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. It also restricts the maritime route that could have linked the regime to East Africa, including the Republic of Somaliland, which has become increasingly important in the regime’s regional calculations concerning the Red Sea.

To understand the seriousness of this matter, it is important to remember that Israel participated in the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt in 1956 after Egypt restricted Israeli navigation through the Gulf of Aqaba. Egypt’s closure of the Strait of Tiran, which connects the Gulf of Aqaba to the Red Sea, also contributed to the outbreak of the 1967 war.

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

Women’s kata secure silver at 2026 Asian Games

TEHRAN - In the women's team kata final held at the Toyohashi Gymnasium, the Iranian team, represented by Fatemeh Sadeghi, Sepideh Amini and Zeinab Hosseini, faced Vietnam and suffered a 5–0 defeat, settling for the silver medal.

Iran's silver at the 2026 Asian Games marks the first-ever Asian Games medal for the country in women's kata.

On their way to the final, the Iranian women's kata team defeated Thailand and the Philippines earlier in the day.

The team is coached by Fatemeh Baghlanipour.

Furthermore, Morteza Namati claimed a gold medal at the Men's Kumite -75kg.

The Iranian athlete defeated Uzbekistan's Davut Nazymradov 4–3 in the final match.

Kazakhstan's Nurkanat Azhikanov and Syrian Fawaz Bani Al-Marjeh won bronze medals.

Aliasghar Asiabari also seized a silver medal at the Games.

Asiabari lost to Jordan's Mohammad Al'jafari 9-1 in the final match of the Men's Kumite 84 kg.

The bronze medals went to Chung Meng-yu from Chinese Taipei and Qatar's Abdulla Babikr.

And, Fatemehzahra Saeidabadi snatched a silver medal at the 2026 Asian Games.

She lost to Adeola Fay Robert from Malaysia 6-4 in the Women's Kumite -55kg final.

Cok Istri Agung Sanistyarani from Indonesia and Kazakhstan's Bella Samasheva won bronze medals in the weight class.

Karate at the 2026 Asian Games is being held from Sept. 20 to 30 at the Toyohashi City General Gymnasium in Toyohashi, Aichi, Japan.

Pepe Losada joins Iran football team coaching staff

TEHRAN - Following the departure of Andranik Teymourian and Aliasghar Ghorbanali-pour from the Iran national team coaching staff, head coach Amir Ghalenoei has bolstered his backroom team with the additions of Mehrdad Khanban and Pepe Losada.

The Football Federation of Iran began negotiations with several candidates identified by Ghalenoei to complete the coaching staff, eventually confirming the appointments of Khanban and Losada as the national team prepare for the next stage of their campaign.

Khanban, 44, is a familiar figure within Iranian football and has extensive experience with the national team. He began his professional coaching career with Persepolis club and later worked under Carlos Queiroz with Iran. His first spell with the national team lasted until 2018, when he left the coaching staff ahead of the FIFA World Cup in Russia.

Following Dragan Skocic's appointment as Iran head coach, Khanban returned to the national team setup. He subsequently spent several years at Persepolis, working alongside coaches including Gabriel Calderon, Yahya Golmohammadi and Osmar .

Khanban was part of the Persepolis staff during their title-winning campaign before moving to Tractor. Last season, he worked on the coaching staff under Dragan Skocic and Mohammad Rabiei. He also took charge of Tractor on an interim basis during their AFC Champions League Elite clash with Al-Gharafa.

Khanban will now return to the national team, although in a different capacity, joining Ghalenoei's staff as one of his assistant coaches.

Meanwhile, Spanish fitness coach Pepe Losada has been appointed as the national team's new conditioning coach.

The 50-year-old has extensive experience in physical preparation and has previously worked in Iranian football with Persepolis, Nassaji Mazandaran and Gol Gohar.

Losada enjoyed one of the most successful spells of his career at Persepolis. During the 2022/23 season, he was part of the squad

that won the Iranian Pro League, Hazfi Cup and Iranian Super Cup. The following season, he remained with the club as Persepolis again lifted the league title and Super Cup.

According to Spanish club Balompédica Linense, Losada has more than two decades of experience in physical preparation. Earlier in his career, he also spent around 12 years working within the Cádiz setup in Spain.

With Khanban and Losada now joining Ghalenoei's staff, Iran have reshaped their coaching team as preparations continue for the next stage of the national team's campaign and the 2027 AFC Asian Cup.

Women’s kabaddi beat Bangladesh in Nagoya

TEHRAN - Iran's women's kabaddi team continued their winning start at the Nagoya Asian Games with a commanding 54–19 victory over Bangladesh in their second match on Tuesday.

Team Melli delivered a dominant performance throughout the contest to secure their second consecutive win of the tournament.

Iran had opened their Asian Games campaign with a victory over hosts Japan, making it two wins from two matches.

The Iranian women will face their toughest test yet when they take on powerhouse India on Wednesday.

Men’s kabaddi overpower Nepal in Nagoya

TEHRAN - Iran's men's kabaddi team got off to a winning start at the Nagoya Asian Games, defeating Nepal 76–23 in their opening match.

Iran produced a dominant performance to secure a convincing victory and make a strong start to their campaign.

The Iranian side are drawn in Group A alongside Pakistan, Nepal, Malaysia and Thailand.

Iran will play their second group-stage match against Malaysia on Wednesday, as they look to maintain their winning momentum.

Kabaddi at the 2026 Asian Games is being held from Sept. 21 to 26 at Tōkai Citizens Gymnasium.

This is the sport's consecutive ninth appearance at the Games, since the 1990 edition. India are the defending champions in both events.

Iran, South Korea share spoils in handball

TEHRAN - Iran's men's handball team earned their first point at the 2026 Nagoya Asian Games after playing out an exciting 26–26 draw with South Korea in their third group-stage match.

South Korea, the most decorated team in Asian Games handball history, entered the contest on the back of a victory over Kuwait. The Koreans and Iran, coached by Nenad Kljaic, produced a closely fought battle from the opening minutes.

The two sides traded goals throughout the first half, with Iran taking a narrow 14–13 lead into the break.

Iran also made a strong start to the second half and looked to extend their advantage, but South Korea refused to let the game slip away. The contest remained evenly balanced until the final moments.

With the clock having expired, the referees awarded South Korea a penalty following a controversial incident. The Koreans converted the spot throw to level the score at 26–26, ensuring the two teams shared the points.

The draw marked Iran's first point of the 2026 Asian Games campaign.

Kljaic's side will now turn their attention to their final group-stage match against Kazakhstan on Wednesday, as Iran look to secure a place in the next stage of the competition.

Tourism ministry focuses on domestic travel, neighbors and AI-driven transformation

TEHRAN – Iran is focusing on domestic tourism and travel to neighboring countries as it seeks to revive the tourism industry following the country's war with the US forces, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpei said Tuesday.

Speaking at a press conference marking the country's National Tourism Week, Mohseni-Bandpei said the Tourism Ministry had developed different scenarios for managing travel during periods of conflict, uncertainty and peace, while stressing that tourism remains vulnerable because of its impact on employment and foreign-exchange earnings.

“Our focus is currently on domestic tourism,” he said, adding that in international tourism, priority was being given to countries sharing land borders with Iran.

Iraq is the ministry's first priority, he said, noting that nine areas of cooperation had been identified to activate tourism between the two neighboring countries. Tourism offices in Afghanistan and Pakistan have also been activated, while participation in international tourism exhibitions is being used to stimulate foreign demand.

Mohseni-Bandpei said the ministry would continue supporting travel despite difficult circumstances.

He cited ministry figures showing that about 23.8 million trips were made across Iran during the 12-day war and the following 40-day war. Only about 4% of travelers stayed in formal accommodation facilities, while most stayed with relatives or in second homes.

He also praised tourism businesses, hotels and medical centers for helping people who traveled to safer areas during the conflict. Some hotels in Tehran



and service providers in provinces including Golestan offered free services to travelers, he said, describing the assistance as an important expression of social solidarity.

The deputy minister also emphasized the need to accelerate the digital transformation of tourism and make practical use of artificial intelligence.

He said the UN Tourism's theme for this year focuses on a “digital agenda and artificial intelligence for tourism redesign,” adding that Iran needs to assess and apply the technology according to its own circumstances and cultural requirements.

“Destination selection, travel planning, marketing, booking and the tourism experience” all need to be reconsidered in light of technological change, he said.

Mohseni-Bandpei said Iran had already begun the process of making its tourism industry smarter and would develop it in line with national conditions, while seeking to preserve cultural identity and improve des-

ignation and visitor-experience management.

Seyyed Mostafa Fatemi, director general of domestic tourism development, said artificial intelligence was already being used on a daily basis to influence travelers' decisions and determine tourism destinations.

He said more than 650 tourism events would be held across Iran's 31 provinces during Tourism Week under the title “Mehr-e Jonoub” (Southern Affection), with particular emphasis on southern provinces.

Fatemi said the ministry was also seeking to diversify tourism destinations and stimulate demand through events, social-media management and discounts. While travel had been concentrated in the northern provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and Ardabil over the past year, he said travel was now spreading to provinces including Khorasan Razavi, Semnan, Golestan, Zanjan, Qazvin, East and West Azarbaijan, Kord-estan and Hamadan.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Tajari, an-

other tourism ministry official, said 246 tourism projects were scheduled to open, adding 1,855 rooms to the country's tourism accommodation capacity.

The projects include 16 hotels and hotel-apartments, 71 eco-lodges, 26 traditional restaurants, 16 tourism complexes, 71 travel-service offices and 46 other tourism infrastructure projects.

Among the projects are three five-star hotels in Isfahan, Rasht and Mashhad, as well as one four-star, five three-star and one two-star hotel.

Tajari said the private sector remained active in tourism infrastructure development and that government and parliamentary incentives had helped encourage investment in the sector.

The press conference also featured the unveiling of the poster for World Tourism Day and Iran's National Tourism Week. The “new tourism year” is also being named after Iranian explorers Issa and Abdolhossein Omidvar, known as the Omidvar Brothers.

Iran to promote tourism potential at Dushanbe Intl. Tourism Exhibition

to IRNA.

Delegations comprising provincial officials and private-sector representatives from Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Fars and Tehran will also visit the exhibition and take part in business meetings and negotiations with their Tajik counterparts, he added.

Babaei said Iran and Tajikistan have significant potential for cooperation in tourism, adding that expanded tourism exchanges could contribute to broader economic and trade relations between the two countries.

In addition to cultural and historical tourism, he identified health, pilgrimage, nature-based, urban and business tourism as areas with potential for bilateral cooperation.

Business meetings and direct contacts among travel agencies, tour operators, hotels and other tourism-sector businesses are

among the key opportunities provided by the exhibition for Iran's private sector, Babaei said.

Such contacts could help Iranian and Tajik companies develop joint tour packages, increase tourist exchanges and establish new business partnerships, he added.

Babaei stressed that the participation of Iranian provinces and private-sector companies is not intended merely as an exhibition presence, but aims to establish business links and turn Iran's tourism potential into practical and sustainable cooperation with Tajik partners.

The Dushanbe International Tourism Exhibition 2026 (DITE 2026) is being held from September 24 to 26 at the Dushanbe Exhibition Center, with tourism companies and industry representatives from several countries taking part.

Ground broken for Makkoran’s history and culture museum in Chabahar

TEHRAN - Ground was broken for the Makkoran's history and culture museum in the Chabahar Free Zone on Tuesday, marking the start of a project aimed at documenting and showcasing the ancient history and cultural heritage of Iran's Makkoran coast.

The ceremony was attended by Hossein Forouzan, secretary of Iran's High Council of Free and Special Economic Zones; Mohammad-Saeid Arbabi, chief executive of the Chabahar Free Zone Organization; Alireza Noura, governor of Chabahar; and a number of provincial and regional officials.

Hamidreza Soleimani, CEO of the Dafehne Museums of the Mostazafan Foundation, said the museum was designed to provide a comprehensive and documented account of the ancient



history and rich cultural heritage of the Makkoran coast.

The museum will be built on three floors, Soleimani said.

The ground floor will serve as the entrance and introductory area, where visitors will be introduced to the region through interactive touchscreens, sensory

displays and other digital technologies.

The first floor will house archaeological artifacts and present the history of navigation and maritime trade in Makkoran, while the second floor will focus on the region's development, infrastructure, industrial potential and contemporary transformations.

The museum will occupy a site of about 10,000 square meters, with a built-up area of approximately 2,500 square meters, according to Soleimani.

Under an earlier memorandum of understanding between the Chabahar Free Zone Organization and the Dafehne Museums Institute, the institute will oversee and provide specialist expertise for the museum's design, content development and launch.

The Makkoran coast, also known as Makran or Mokran, is a largely semi-desert coastal strip along the Sea of Oman, extending across southeastern Iran and southwestern Pakistan. In Iran, the coast lies mainly in Sistan-Baluchestan province and includes Chabahar, a major port and commercial center on the Sea of Oman.

Over 200,000 foreign nationals enrolled in Iranian schools

TEHRAN – More than 200,000 foreign national students, including boys and girls, have been enrolled in schools in Iran and will benefit from educational services in the current academic year, which starts on September 23.

The schools have even enrolled students who faced residency status issues, preserving their right to education, IRNA quoted Ali Farhadi, an official with the Ministry of Education, as saying.

In July 2025, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Filippo Grandi, lauded the efforts of the Education Ministry in supporting and providing services to foreign students.

“The main reason why I am visiting Iran is to appreciate the country’s valuable services provided to refugees. I have repeatedly talked about this issue in international forums, and urged them to follow Iran as a role model,” Mehr news agency quoted Grandi as saying.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with Education Minister Alireza Kazemi on July 23.

During the meeting, Grandi referred to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei’s statement in 2015, according to which all Afghan refugees, including undocumented ones, were allowed to be enrolled in schools. The official called it a valuable historical measure that surprised everyone, including rich countries.

For his part, Kazemi expounded on the country’s measures and challenges in assisting refugees.

Iran spends 100 million dollars annually on providing services to foreign nationals, while UNHCR’s contribution has been less than a percent over the past two years

The presence of refugee students at schools has made classes overcrowded, which has consequently affected Iranian students’ academic performance, the official added.

Referring to the lack of educational space and the substantial financial burden of providing it, Kazemi said it is socially and economically costly; people expect these expenditures to be spent on Iranians, which is a logical demand.

The education minister went on to highlight the economic and social challenges caused by foreign nationals, saying that due to economic problems, Afghan refugees involve their children in helping generate income, which leads to severe social impacts in the country.

“Despite all these problems, Iran has never reduced the services provided to refugees. The country continues to provide the best services to legally permitted refugee students, ensuring none of them is deprived of education,” Kazemi noted.

Iranian, Pakistani officials explore potential to develop science diplomacy

TEHRAN – University of Tehran Chancellor Mohammad-Hossein Omid and Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Imran Ahmed Siddiqui have explored avenues to strengthen scientific, academic, and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

The two sides met on Saturday, highlighting the need to implement the previously signed memorandum of understanding (MOU), IRNA reported.

During the meeting, Omid emphasized the cultural and linguistic commonalities between the two nations and said that Iranian and Pakistani scholars exchanged knowledge in the past, and the Persian language served as their shared language.

He also proposed organizing a joint conference to examine the life, works, and intellectual legacy of renowned philosopher and poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal Lahori, a distinguished literary figure in both countries.

The official went on to elaborate on the global ranking and accomplishments of University of Tehran, noting that the university is interested in promoting scientific cooperation among faculty members and students of the two countries.

For his part, Siddiqui announced Pakistan’s readiness to deepen collaborations with Iran in scientific, technological, and

economic activities. Holding joint meetings and expanding studies in different fields like international studies, technology and engineering, and economics were among the other issues mentioned.

He also called for boosting ties in evolving technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and proposed establishing ‘Iqbal Lahori room’ at the University of Tehran as a symbol of scientific commonalities.

Highlighting the key role of embassies in facilitating academic interactions, he suggested top Pakistani universities, including Quaid-e Azam University, National University of Science and Technology (NUST), COMSATS University Islamabad, and University of Punjab, for the development of scientific interactions.

The two sides agreed to conduct collaborative online courses, exchange students and professors, and provide scholarships to reciprocal students.

Pakistan proposes setting up scientific working group with Iran

In June, the Pakistani Minister of State for the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajih Qamar, met with the Iranian Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, proposing that the two countries establish

economic activities. Holding joint meetings and expanding studies in different fields like international studies, technology and engineering, and economics were among the other issues mentioned.

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Now that Afghanistan has attained stability, Afghan nationals are better able to return, with dignity, and serve their home country, he said.

Even to support (deported) refugees to continue education and learning, Iran is ready to educate all Afghan students using the local education platforms, within the framework of the tripartite cooperation agreement, and provide them with a valid educational certificate based on the statutes of virtual schools approved by the Supreme Council of Education, the official added.

Grandi lauded the proposal and voiced the UNHCR’s support of the program, calling it an invaluable measure for the young generation.

“I am aware of low contributions, and I admit more funds have to be assigned to your services, but due to the current situation and sanctions, it is not possible. We are not a rich partner, but we would be happy to remain your partner,” the official said.

Grandi also held a meeting with Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni to explore ways to address problems related to Afghan refugees living in the country and those being deported.

The meeting focused on holding a trilateral meeting among Iranian officials, Afghan officials, and UNHCR representatives to increase financial assistance from international organizations, organize Afghan refugees, and prevent drug trafficking, according to the Ministry of Interior’s website.

During the meeting, Grandi lauded Iran’s generosity in hosting refugees over the past four decades. “I’m personally well aware of the burden the country and the Iranian people are going through. Unfortunately, the international community’s support for Iran has significantly declined in recent years. However, we ask Iran to return (illegal) immigrants gradually, not to put Afghanistan

under pressure because the country cannot accept them all at once due to economic and social problems.”

He also shared insights from his recent visit to Kabul, where he held discussions with officials from the Afghan interim government about refugee matters and voluntary returns.

The official hoped that Iran would continue its humanitarian approach with the contributions of the international community.

For his part, Momeni said, “Unauthorized refugees will be returned to their home countries without being asked any questions anywhere in the world. However, in Iran, if an Afghan’s life is threatened or if they are sick and need to stay here for treatment, their return will be delayed. They have not been deported violently.

Afghan governors have seen firsthand how the deported nationals were treated respectfully.”

The official went on to say that some three to four legal Afghans are residing in the country who are working and are respected by Iranians. Their children are attending the same schools as Iranians, and work in Iranian workshops, he added.

Nader Yar-Ahmadi, the head of the National Organization for Migration, for his part, said Iran has hosted Afghan refugees for over four decades, and will continue to do so in a different way, though. Only documented refugees will be able to benefit from the services in the country.

“Mr. Grandi has honestly confessed that international financial support is nothing compared to the country’s extremely costly measures. We expect the international community to enhance its assistance,” Yar-Ahmadi highlighted.



a joint scientific working group.

The officials met on the sidelines of the 7th Turkey Education-Technology Summit (known as TETZ 2026), which was held in Istanbul from June 26 to 28.

Iran’s recent achievements in the international arena are inspiring for many countries, including Pakistan, ISNA quoted Qamar as saying.

Highlighting the emotional, spiritual, historical, and cultural ties between the two nations, the official said, “Pakistan will stand by Iran in its initiatives and actions, and the relations between Tehran and Islamabad will remain strong and stable based on these commonalities.”

The two sides need to promote collaboration to fully utilize the respective capacities of each other, she added.

The deep linguistic, religious, and civilizational ties between

the two countries will contribute to the development of cooperation, the official further noted.

Referring to the scientific and educational accomplishments of Iran, Qamar said Pakistan can benefit from Iran’s valuable expertise in skills training, agriculture, construction, and production sectors.

For his part, Simaei-Sarraf noted that current scientific, academic, and technological collaborations between Iran and Pakistan are not proportionate to the capacities of both parties.

The official also stressed the need to establish Persian and Urdu language chairs in reciprocal countries.

Highlighting the scientific capabilities of Sistan-Baluchestan University, the science minister announced the university’s readiness to attract Pakistani students.

Royan Institute findings highlight MSCs’ potential for cell-based ASD therapy

TEHRAN – Researchers from Royan Institute, in a study, have managed to lower the Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS) scores and certain inflammatory biomarkers in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) using allogeneic mesenchymal stromal cells (MSCs) derived from umbilical cord Wharton’s jelly.

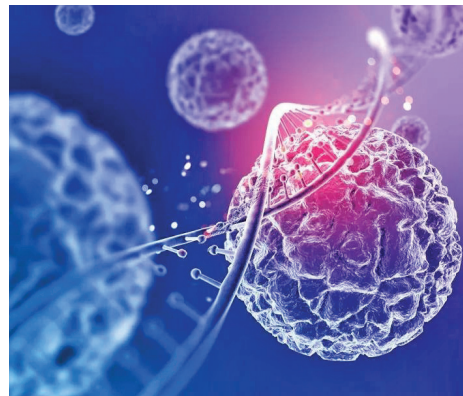
The study was conducted as part of the ongoing research by Royan researchers in the field of regenerative medicine and in the investigation of the potential applications of MSCs for cell-based therapeutic approaches across a range of diseases.

According to the Public Relations Department of Royan Institute, five children with Level 2 ASD participated in the study and received three intrathecal administrations of MSCs derived from umbilical cord Wharton’s jelly. Each administration consisted of 20 million cells, with a one-month interval between administrations, royan.org reported.

The preliminary findings of a Phase I clinical trial evaluated the safety and tolerability of three intrathecal administrations of allogeneic MSCs derived from umbilical cord Wharton’s jelly in children with ASD. No serious adverse events or Grade 3 or higher adverse events were reported during the study period, and the intervention was considered acceptable in terms of safety and tolerability.

These findings are of particular relevance from the perspective of Phase I study design, as a primary objective of such early-phase trials is to assess the safety and tolerability of an investigational intervention and to determine whether further clinical investigation is warranted.

The researchers assessed the severity of autism-related symptoms using the CARS and reported a reduction in CARS scores in all participants. Analysis of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) also demonstrated reductions in



certain inflammatory biomarkers, including tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-a) and interleukin-6 (IL-6). Changes in patterns of cerebral electrical activity were additionally reported based on electroencephalographic (EEG) assessments.

These observations may provide a basis for further investigation into the potential relationships among cellular and molecular alterations, neurophysiological parameters, and selected clinical manifestations of autism spectrum disorder in future studies.

According to the investigators, rigorous evaluation of the potential efficacy of this approach, the durability of the observed effects, and its benefit-risk profile will require further clinical trials involving larger numbers of participants, randomized study designs, and appropriate control groups.

The findings of this study, published in the international journal ‘Stem Cell Research & Therapy’, should not be interpreted as evidence that autism has been treated or cured through cell therapy. Rather, the findings provide preliminary data regarding safety and certain clinical and biological changes observed following the intervention, which may inform the design and scientific rationale of future studies.

New rare diseases identified in Iran

TEHRAN – Eighteen more rare diseases have been identified in the country, bringing the total number of rare diseases to 531, according to the Rare Disease Foundation.

Idiopathic camptocormia, Intellectual disability, eye abnormalities, microcephaly, peripheral spasticity syndrome, Riboflavin transporter deficiency (Brown-Vialetto-van Laere syndrome (BVVL)), Mantle cell lymphoma, Chronic eosinophilic leukemia, combined immunodeficiency due to IL21R deficiency, Isolated tibial hemimelia, Phylloides tumor of the breast, and 3MC syndrome are among rare diseases that have been identified in the country, Mehr news agency reported.

According to WHO, rare diseases are often serious, chronic, and life-threatening. The European Union (EU) definition of a rare disease affects fewer than 5 in 10,000 people. Around 80 percent of rare diseases are genetic disorders, and half of them occur during childhood.

Rare diseases affect millions of people globally and are often complex, involving multiple organ groups and resulting in disabilities and premature death. Many people living with a rare disease frequently experience diagnostic delays, fragmented care, limited access to effective interventions, financial hardship, stigma and social exclusion.

The incidence of rare diseases is very low to the extent that maybe one or two people with a certain rare disease are present in the country. Some rare diseases such as ‘butterfly skin or EB’, ‘Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)’, ‘Metabolic diseases’, ‘Autism’, and ‘Dystrophies’ are among the most common cases in the country.

Among rare diseases, cancers are the most expensive ones covered by the Rare Disease Foundation so that 70 percent of the funds is allocated to cancer-related medicines. The rise in cancers highlights the need for the development of preventive programs, early detection, targeted screening, and fair access to health services.

The budget allocated to rare and hard-to-treat diseases has increased over the past few years, rising from 50 trillion rials (about

21.7 million dollars) in the first year to 120 trillion rials (about 52.17 million dollars) this year.

Health insurance provided for some 2m patients

In May, Sajjad Razavi, an official with the health ministry stated that about two million patients with rare and hard-to-treat diseases are covered by the Health Insurance Organization.

The Rare Disease Foundation also covers the patients, IRNA quoted Razavi as saying.

The official made the remarks on the occasion of the national day of rare and hard-to-treat diseases observed annually on the 18th of Ordibehesht, the second Iranian calendar month, which falls on May 8.

The day is a good opportunity to rethink the health system’s responsibilities toward patients who need ongoing, multidimensional care and comprehensive support because of the complex, chronic, and mainly hard-to-treat nature of their diseases.

To safeguard the patients’ health and lower financial burden on households, tens of specialized healthcare service packages have been defined for them, with some more being continuously developed. The packages include diagnostic, therapeutic, pharmaceutical, rehabilitation, and dental services, whether in the form of outpatient or inpatient services, which are provided with minimal deductibles or free of charge.

Despite lower prevalence, rare and hard-to-treat diseases are among the top health priorities due to difficulties in their diagnosis and treatment.

There are no cures for rare diseases, and patients with rare diseases need supportive care and rehabilitation services throughout their lives. Hence, the day highlights the need for coherent planning, the development of recurrent specialized services, genetic counselling, the expansion of insurance coverage, and social support.

Promoting health literacy, strengthening the referral system, and expanding preventive services are key factors to lower mortality among patients.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Death is preferable over a life of disgrace. Frugal living is preferable over begging from others.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:11:57 Evening: 18:18 Dawn: 4:30 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:54 (tomorrow)

20th International Resistance Theater Festival kicks off in Tehran

TEHRAN – The 20th International Resistance Theater Festival kicked off on Monday at the Azadi Tower in Tehran.

The beginning of the opening ceremony featured a video screening in memory of Iran's martyred leader and the martyred commanders of the 12-day and Ramadan imposed wars, IRNA reported.

Speaking at the event, Mohammad Kazemtabar, the festival's secretary, stated that more than 20 stage productions on the theme of the third imposed war will go on stage during the festival.

Subsequently, Mehdi Shafiei, Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance for Artistic Affairs, read out the text of his message to the festival:

"Art is an important part of a nation's memory, and theater, by placing human beings directly alongside one another, is one of the most intimate and impactful languages for narrating history, suffering, hope, and the resistance of nations. The Resistance Theater Festival is not merely an artistic event; it is an opportunity for a part of the historical and lived experience of the Iranian people to be re-read through the language of art and passed on to today's and tomorrow's generations.

Resistance is not just a word to describe the days of war; resistance is the culture of standing firm against aggression, injustice, and humiliation; a culture that keeps hope alive in difficult moments and connects humanity to the future.

In recent years, alongside the historical experiences of the Sacred Defense, we have also witnessed difficult days and new wars and threats; days that once again demonstrated how the Iranian people can stand up against hardships, defend their identity and land, and continue to live. In such circumstances, art gains even greater importance. Art can create the human narrative of resistance; the narrative of mothers, fathers, youth, artists, soldiers, rescue workers, medical staff, and all the people who, in hard times, played a role in preserving hope and life. Theater can elevate these narratives beyond the level of news and reports, transforming them into a human and enduring experience.

For this very reason, resistance theater is not

merely a representation of historical events; this festival is a platform for discovering new languages, fresh perspectives, and creative narratives of the concept of resistance; a narrative that today's audience, especially the younger generation, can connect with. Today, more than ever, we need an art that possesses both memory and a horizon; an art that narrates our historical roots while speaking of the future. If the Resistance Theater Festival can use its works to build a bridge between the past and the present, memory and the future, and suffering and hope, then it will transcend being a festival and become a part of the society's cultural memory.

I hope this festival will serve as a stage for witnessing fresh talents, hearing diverse voices, and creating works that remain in the minds and hearts of the audience, not just during the festival days. I believe that as long as a nation entrusts its narrative to art, no incident can destroy its memory and hope. Resistance theater is the narrative of standing firm; but not merely standing against an aggressor, rather standing against oblivion and despair. We need art so that what has passed upon us is not forgotten, and what we can still build is seen."

Another part of the ceremony was a tribute to Kourosh Zarei, a cinema, theater, and television artist, in recognition of his years of effort in artistic activities and his dedication to narrating Quranic stories and producing theater centered on the art of the revolution.

Subsequently, Jafar Ghasemi, an artist from Minab, performed a monologue centered on his personal observations of the American-Zionist attack on the Shajareh Tayyebah school in Minab on February 28.

In a part of the ceremony, the play collection "8 Scenes of the Ramadan War," compiled by Manouchehr Akbarloo, was unveiled. The collection comprises eight new works by theater writers from across the country, focusing on the events and truths of the Ramadan War.

In the next part of the ceremony, active organizers and instructors of the educational workshops of the 20th edition of the festival were honored.

ter Kennard, Gabby Samara, Malak Mattar, Huda Lutfi, Nada Mobarak, Mohamed Abia, and Caroline Burraway.

"It was incredible seeing all the different interpretations. One of the artists from Mexico took the bateekha that we sent him, 3D-printed it, and made an olive branch out of the watermelon," says Taymour.

"Taya was exactly the right person to reach out to for this," Taymour said. "She rolled up her sleeves and got to work, along with our other three co-founders, Ghada Sousou, Dima Fakhry, and Malak Fouad, who had exactly the same attitude. Each one of us brought in different areas of expertise: finance, media, and curation. We all wanted to contribute and make a difference, but none of us realized it would grow this big".

The logistics of shipping 28 fiberglass watermelons from Egypt to countries around the world and then getting them all back to London in one piece wasn't easy. "There was a lot of improvisation involved," Elzayadi and Taymour tell us. "The energy was so beautiful because the minute you mentioned that this is something that we're doing for Palestine, no one hesitated to help. All of the services were given to us at cost or even without a fee," said Elzayadi.

Mehr Media Group receives two awards at OANA Awards 2026 in Moscow

TEHRAN – Mehr Media Group received two awards at the OANA Awards 2026 during the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) 65th anniversary conference in Moscow on Monday.

In the Best Article Competition, the article "Iranian art: the triangle of beauty, creativity and culture" by Marzieh Rahmani won first place and the article "War of narratives in the field; A reporter from the heart of the field / How did the right narration keep people in the scene?" by Azadeh Fazli won second place, Mehr reported.

The awards were received by Mehr Media Group CEO Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati, who earlier in the day addressed the OANA Media Forum.

Speaking at the panel titled "Strategies to Combat the Spread of Misinformation and Fake News," Rahmati pointed to the media's role in shaping the public's perception of reality and said: "Today, the media is not merely a tool for transmitting news; it can influence how people perceive reality, contribute to the formation of public narratives, and in some cases, even change how public opinion perceives a crisis."

"For this reason, the responsibility of the media is not limited to speed; accuracy, fact-checking, transparency, and professional ethics are also essential components of this responsibility," he added.

Rahmati stated that what audiences accept as reality is often influenced by narratives that are repeated and republished over time.

"The media can place a subject at the center of public attention or push it to the margins. Rahmati emphasized: The main danger arises when the media presents a subject that lacks an objective or documented basis in a way that causes the audience to accept it as truth," he noted.

"Our duty should not be to construct an artificial reality; our duty is to tell our audience only what is real, verifiable, and evidence-based. A powerful media organization is not one that can tell stories better than others, but one that can build its narrative on truth and evidence," he added.

"When a credible media outlet remains silent or reacts with delay during a crisis, an information vacuum is usually filled by other narratives that may be incorrect, exaggerated, or even intentionally misleading," he asserted.

"This does not mean the media should publish news hastily and without fact-checking; rather, it must do two things simultaneously: verify information while ensuring that an information vacuum is not left unanswered for an extended period," he emphasized.

Referring to what he termed the "cost of a narrative vacuum," Rahmati noted that during the January 8-9 unrest in Iran, varying figures regarding the death toll were circulated. "Donald Trump, in his social media posts, cited extremely high numbers, including claims of over 100,000 deaths. These figures gained widespread political and media attention without providing complete lists of names, individual details, or evidence that could be independently verified."

"In contrast, according to official statistics released by the Iranian government, the number of fatalities was announced as 3,117, of whom 2,427 were ordinary citizens who lost their lives due to rioters, according to the report," the Mehr Media Group CEO stated.

The CEO of Mehr Media Group, Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati, speaks at the "Strategies to Combat the Spread of Misinformation and Fake News" panel during the media session of the 65th anniversary of OANA in Moscow on September 21, 2026.

"The importance of this figure is not limited to the number 3,117; the names, details, and information regarding these individuals have also been published, which allows for the possibility of verifying the statistics," he said.

"The difference between these two types of narratives demonstrates why documentation is important. Unsubstantiated figures can spread rapidly and influence public opinion, but a documented narrative allows others to independently examine and evaluate the information," he explained.

Continuing his speech, Rahmati stated: "In today's world, almost no subject remains unspoken forever. If a media organization remains silent on a matter, other media outlets, social networks, or anonymous users may present their own narratives about it. Therefore, the main issue is not whether we should talk about a crisis or not; the core issue is how we should talk about it."

Referencing a report by Mehr News regarding the recent attack on a wedding ceremony in Kouhestak, Sirik, he said: "Based on the information provided in this report, five people—including a four-year-old child—were killed, and 63 people were injured, 50 of whom were women and children."

"A Mehr News correspondent arrived at the scene immediately after the wedding ceremony was targeted and prepared field reports. This immediate presence ensured that direct information, images, and initial evidence were recorded and published before incomplete, distorted, or fake narratives could dominate the media landscape," he added.

"The reports prepared by the Mehr correspondent provided a foundation for forming an accurate narrative of what had occurred, and many other media outlets and sources cited these reports and images," Rahmati noted.

"In such cases, the media must build its narrative on evidence, such as hospital images, interviews with witnesses, medical information, photos from the scene, and technical evidence," he emphasized.

Referring to the ongoing investigation into this incident, the CEO of Mehr Media Group noted: "A documented report can go beyond the news agency itself and become part of an international fact-checking process."

"In this incident, the reports and images published by Mehr News were utilized by foreign media and independent researchers, serving as references in their investigation and

fact-checking processes," he underlined.

Citing a report from Drop Site News and an analysis by Christiaan Triebert, he said: "Drop Site utilized footage recorded at Minab Hospital, and Triebert examined a piece of weaponry and the markings on it, providing further technical details. Following this process, the United Nations fact-finding committee announced that the United States had directly targeted the wedding ceremony."

"If a report is accurate, documented, and functional, it can become a source for international media and research," he stressed.

In another part of his speech, Rahmati addressed the necessity of correcting media errors, stating: "No media organization is completely immune to mistakes, especially in conditions where the volume of news is extremely high and newsrooms face intense time and information pressure."

The CEO of Mehr Media Group defined the process of correcting an error as including: identifying the mistake, explaining what happened, apologizing to the audience, removing or correcting the inaccurate content, and ultimately maintaining long-term transparency. "When a media organization explicitly announces that a report was incorrect, explains why the mistake occurred, and corrects it, it demonstrates respect for the truth and for its audience."

"Correcting a report may have a short-term cost to a media organization's credibility, but concealing a mistake can incur a much higher cost and severely damage audience trust," he noted.

On the role of new technologies in combating fake news, Rahmati stated: "Today, it is no longer possible to fight fake news using only traditional methods. The volume of information, the speed of dissemination, and the complexity of fraudulent content have increased to such an extent that media organizations require new tools and broader cooperation."

He identified three essential elements in this regard: "integrated newsrooms, artificial intelligence, and fact-checking networks. AI should not replace journalists or editors, but it can assist media outlets in searching, organizing, comparing information, identifying patterns, and conducting preliminary investigations."

"Cooperation between OANA and the Global Fact-Checking Network (GFCN) can also assist news agencies in creating shared

experiences, methods, and standards, allowing them to combat misinformation with greater coordination and a more professional approach," he asserted.

In another part of his speech, the CEO of Mehr Media Group stressed the necessity of turning media MoUs into practical cooperation, saying: "Simply signing an MoU is not enough to solve the problem of misinformation; an MoU only becomes valuable when it leads to practical collaboration."

Rahmati called for the establishment of professional and continuous communication between OANA member agencies and foreign media bureaus across various countries.

"Trust is the foundation of this cooperation. If we trust one another, we can examine narratives with greater accuracy, share information more rapidly, and respond to suspicious claims through professional dialogue rather than fragmented reactions," he added.

In his concluding remarks, Rahmati linked all these discussions to the principle of professional ethics: "Technology, artificial intelligence, social networks, and international cooperation are all important tools, but none of them can replace media ethics."

"Media ethics means striving to achieve the best possible outcome in any situation, even when the media is facing time pressure or political and economic pressures," he noted.

He emphasized the importance of continuing the work of the OANA Ethics Committee and publishing documents and recommendations tailored to the current conditions of media organizations, saying: "Media ethics becomes even more critical during a crisis, as inaccurate news can impact security, human lives, international relations, and public trust."

In summarizing his speech, Rahmati emphasized: "Media organizations must not allow an information vacuum to form during a crisis; speed must always be accompanied by accuracy and fact-checking; documented reporting can serve as a basis for subsequent fact-checking; transparent correction of errors is a sign of accountability; and AI and fact-checking networks can create new capacities for combating fake news."

"All these efforts must be built upon trust, cooperation, and professional ethics. The responsibility of the media is not to construct an artificial reality for the audience, but to report the truth with accuracy, transparency, and responsibility," he concluded.