Straight Truth

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Israeli politicians feign outrage over settler attacks while expanding land theft and war

By staff writer

TEHRAN — Saleh Zahran's olive trees are ripening and rotting at the same time. The 39-year-old farmer inherited 120 of them near Deir Abu Mishal, west of Ramallah, and this season he reached about 20.

Settlers have held the approach to his land since June. Over the weekend they torched a dozen Palestinian cars in three nearby villages, and on Sunday Israeli forces flattened a herding community in the northern Jordan Valley. ▶ Page 5

Iran's power strategy: balancing maximum striking power with decentralized capabilities

By Batool Subeiti

LONDON - In comparing two approaches to managing confrontation, the first is the approach attributed to the United States and the Israeli occupation entity. This is based on launching powerful and concentrated strikes against specific targets, in the hope of rapidly collapsing the enemy's capabilities or political will.

This approach can be understood as a vertical concentration of power at particular points. That is, directing the greatest possible amount of force towards specific centers of gravity, in order to achieve a decisive impact within a short period of time. ▶ Page 5

AI-based neurosurgical assistant developed at University of Tehran Sci-Tech Park

TEHRAN – A knowledge-based company operating at the University of Tehran Science and Technology Park has developed an artificial intelligence-powered smart assistant designed to support neurosurgeons during surgical procedures.

The system integrates artificial intelligence, medical image processing, and surgical navigation technologies to enable more precise surgical planning and provide real-time guidance to surgeons during operations, IRNA reported.

The smart system aims to enhance surgical precision, improve patient safety, and expand access to advanced medical technologies for healthcare centers nationwide. ▶ Page 7

A sheet of paper: The enduring wisdom of Chinese civilization

By Shahrokh Saei

BEIJING — A single sheet of paper can be light enough to float on the wind, yet strong enough to carry the soul of a great civilization across thousands of years.

That quiet power is what makes "The Fate of a Sheet of Paper" so striking. Produced by CGTN Persian, this 19-episode AI-created series uses a time-travel story to explore the Eastern Han dynasty, the work of Cai Lun, and the birth of Chinese paper. Rather than burying viewers in dry historical facts, the series focuses on something much deeper: the virtues, the compassion, and the enduring spirit that have kept Chinese civilization alive and flourishing from ancient times into the modern day.

The pillars of ancient wisdom

Through its characters, the series highlights the timeless values that have shaped China for thousands of years. ▶ Page 8



©Getty Images

Army personnel monitor screens displaying maps and imagery of the Gaza Strip on November 20, 2025, in Kiryat Gat, Israel.

The Silicon Valley Kill Chain

Iran urges UN oversight as CENTCOM's open embrace of military AI raises fears of automated war and civilian harm

Iran's Ambassador and Representative to the United Nations warned rapid technological advances are changing the nature of warfare, increasing escalation, miscalculation and civilian casualties. He said weaponization of AI for aggression raises serious concerns, stressing technology must serve peace and cannot shield violators from accountability under international law in conflicts.

By Seyyed Mohammad Torabi

TEHRAN – Iran's warning at the United Nations Security Council this week was not only about bombs and missiles. It was about the software behind them.

Addressing a Council briefing on Tuesday on the "maintenance of international peace and security in an era of rapid technological change," Ambassador and Charge d'Affaires Gholamhossein Darzi said rapid technological advances are changing the nature of warfare, increasing the risks of escalation, miscalculation and civilian casualties.

"Technology must serve humanity and be used for exclusively peaceful purposes, not aggression, domination or violations of state sovereignty," Darzi told the Council.

He then went further, accusing the United States and Israel of weaponizing artificial intelligence in what Tehran describes as two wars of aggression against Iran in June 2025 and February 2026. In particular, he said, published reports confirm the use by the United States of advanced systems including Maven, associated with Palantir Technologies, and Claude, developed by Anthropic, during operations on 28 February 2026 to analyze intelligence, identify and prioritize targets and provide strike coordinates.

"Neither advanced technology nor the involvement of private companies can shield the United States or the Israeli regime from accountability for flagrant violations of their obligations under international law," Darzi said, according to Iranian state media IRNA and CBS News coverage of the session.

A warning in the Security Council

Darzi's statement, delivered on 24 November 2026 in New York, framed AI not as a futuristic risk but as a present weapon. According to the full text published by IRNA, he argued that the weaponization of AI and its use as an instrument of aggression and conflict escalation raises serious concerns, citing the June 2025 and February 2026 confrontations. ▶ Page 3



Minab school photo among TIME magazine's top 100 photos of 2026

TEHRAN – Hamid Vakili's photograph of the family of the martyred child, Mohammad Taha Jafari, mourning over the body of their child, one of the student martyrs from Shajareh Tayyebeh School in Minab, has been included among TIME magazine's top 100 photos of 2026.

Mourners grieve over the body of Mohammad Taha Jafari in Minab, Iran, on March 29. His family had recently learned that his remains had been identified through DNA testing following the Feb. 28 bombing of Shajareh Tayyebeh School. The attack killed scores of students and teachers on the first day of the US and Israeli strikes on Iran, the photo captions read. ▶ Page 8

Iran reiterates to counter blockade

TEHRAN – Senior Iranian officials and military commanders have reiterated the country's determination to counter external pressure, strengthen its defense capabilities and maintain control over security arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz, as tensions with the United States remain high.

Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Mohsen Rezaei said on Wednesday that Iran was firmly determined to break the US blockade, dismissing Washington's plans as a continuation of 'its failed strategy' against the Islamic Republic. ▶ Page 2

Iran, China, Russia, Belarus and Cuba condemn any move to weaponize outer space

TEHRAN – Iran, China, Russia, Belarus and Cuba have strongly condemned any attempt to place weapons in outer space, warning that the United States' acknowledgment of possessing so-called "on-orbit space control weapons" represents a dangerous escalation that threatens international peace and security.

In a joint statement delivered by Iran's representative at the fourth session of the UN General Assembly-mandated Open-Ended Working Group on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) in Geneva on November 24, the five countries reaffirmed their commitment to preserving outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes and called for urgent international action to prevent its militarization. ▶ Page 3

Iran reports naval mine strikes on two tankers, downs US drones in Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN – Iran's military and maritime authorities have announced a series of measures in and around the Strait of Hormuz, reporting that two oil tankers struck naval mines, two US drones were shot down over the strategic waterway, and 26 tugboats were added to a non-compliance list for servicing vessels accused of violating maritime regulations.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy said two oil tankers had struck naval mines in the southern and eastern coastal areas of the Strait of Hormuz in the early hours of the day, triggering explosions and fires in their engine rooms. ▶ Page 2

US-Israeli attacks have hampered Iran-IAEA cooperation: Chinese ambassador

TEHRAN – China's ambassador to Tehran has said US and Israeli attacks on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities have seriously undermined cooperation between Tehran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), describing them as the main obstacle to the resumption of inspections.

Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, Cong Peiwu said the United States and Israel had twice targeted Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities, which are under IAEA safeguards, since June 2025. The attacks, he said, had created major impediments to cooperation between Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog and prevented inspections from taking place.

The ambassador stressed that the history of the Iranian nuclear issue had demonstrated that it could only be resolved through diplomacy. Referring to the memorandum of understanding reached in Islamabad between Iran and the United States, he described it as a valuable outcome of mediation efforts and urged both sides to preserve the diplomatic process and keep the door open to negotiations. ▶ Page 2

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Strong Iran humiliated America

Kayhan said Western media outlets have increasingly acknowledged that the U.S. miserably failed against Iran. According to the newspaper, a campaign that was expected to topple the Islamic Republic and destroy its nuclear, missile, and drone capabilities within weeks instead turned into a political setback for President Trump. More than nine months later, the paper said, the outcome has become so embarrassing that even some figures within the US administration are unwilling to accept responsibility for it. The newspaper further asserted that Iran's military capabilities have not only survived but improved. It stated that Iranian missiles and drones are now more accurate and effective than before. Kayhan also highlighted changes in Iran's military doctrine and the lifting of restrictions on missile range by the country's leadership, arguing that these developments have intensified concerns among US officials and military planners. In the newspaper's view, the conflict demonstrated the limits of American power and reinforced Iran's deterrence capabilities.

Etemad: Tehran's two main concerns about US presence in Syunik

Etemad examined Armenia's launch of the TRIPP project, or the "Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity." According to the paper, the initiative is intended to be much more than an infrastructure project and could reshape economic and geopolitical dynamics across the South Caucasus. Because Iran considers this region an important part of its security environment, developments there are closely monitored in Tehran. The newspaper identified two major Iranian concerns. The first relates to the route itself, which passes through Armenia's Syunik Province. This area is strategically important because it provides Iran with land access to Armenia and, through Armenia, to Georgia and routes leading toward Europe. Tehran therefore sees any major transformation in the region as potentially affecting its economic and transportation interests. The second concern is the involvement of the United States. Although Armenia is expected to retain formal authority over border security and customs administration, Etemad argued that extensive US participation in financing, management, or infrastructure development could significantly expand Washington's influence in one of the region's most sensitive areas to Iranian national security interests.

Sobh-e-No: A reality the US must accept

Sobh-e-No said that recent incidents in the Strait of Hormuz highlight Iran's central role in regional security. The newspaper maintained that the waterway cannot be effectively managed without recognizing Iran as a key actor and rejected claims that the country's naval capabilities have been significantly weakened. It argued that Washington's policies have failed to keep pace with changing regional realities. The paper also called for a security framework based on cooperation between Iran and Oman, stating that regional coordination is the best way to ensure maritime security, reduce tensions, and prevent the Strait of Hormuz from becoming a source of broader international disputes.

Javan: We do not seek anyone's permission to change our policy

Javan addressed debate surrounding potential changes in Iran's strategic doctrine. The newspaper referred to reports suggesting that both China and Russia oppose modifications to Tehran's nuclear doctrine. However, it argued that Iran's decision-making should not depend on the preferences of any foreign country, whether friendly or hostile. According to the paper, Iran previously adopted its position against nuclear weapons without seeking approval from other powers and accepted the consequences of that choice. For the same reason, the newspaper suggested, Tehran would not require anyone's permission if it decided to alter its policies in the future. The article maintained that genuine sovereignty means preserving the ability to make major national decisions independently. Looking first to foreign governments when addressing critical strategic questions, it argued, would weaken governance and undermine national independence. Javan concluded that independence is not merely the defense of past policies but also the freedom to reassess and revise them when national interests require it.

Farhikhtegan: Relations with China should be pursued seriously

In an interview with researcher Vahid Ghorbani, Farhikhtegan discussed the future of Iran-China relations. Ghorbani said the key challenge is turning Iran's strategic view of China into a practical and results-oriented policy. He argued that Iran currently faces three major tasks: managing the consequences of war, redefining regional security arrangements, and strengthening the national economy. Achieving these goals, he said, requires more coordinated political and economic diplomacy toward Beijing. Ghorbani also stressed the importance of making better use of organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in support of Iranian interests. At the same time, he emphasized the need to clearly define economic priorities for Chinese partners. According to him, stronger economic cooperation with China depends on concrete projects, financing mechanisms, and effective implementation plans. Without such practical measures, strategic intentions alone will not produce meaningful economic results for either side.

Iran reiterates to counter blockade



From page 1 ▶ "Trump and his defeated team's plans to blockade Iran are as delusional and futile as their failed war strategy," Rezaei wrote on X. He added that the Iranian nation, Armed Forces and state institutions were determined to overcome the blockade and respond forcefully to any new aggression.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had earlier described the US blockade as entirely unlawful, expressing hope that it would be lifted through a rational and logical approach.

Meanwhile, Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Commander Major General Ahmad Vahidi said Iran's Armed Forces were fully prepared to push the country's adversaries into retreat, stressing that the prospect of Iranian retaliatory operations had significantly constrained their room for action.

Speaking on Wednesday, Vahidi said Iran's adversaries had made extensive efforts to undermine the resolve of the Iranian nation, but that the country's determination remained stronger than ever. He also emphasized the unity and operational readiness of Iran's military forces, saying all branches were fully engaged in defending the country.

The commander said the adversary was experiencing the consequences of its setbacks and facing strategic uncertainty, adding that Iran's Armed Forces had an opportunity to further strengthen their capabilities. He described all components of the IRGC—including its Aerospace Force, Navy, Ground Force, Quds Force and Basij Organization—as stronger and better prepared than before.

In separate remarks, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Ali Abdollahi said Iran's missile capabilities had challenged two major military powers during the recent US-Israeli aggression, forcing them to reconsider their positions.

Abdollahi also referred to Iranian strikes on US military installations in the region, saying a number of bases had sustained extensive damage and some had yet to return to their previous operational condition. He said Washington was seeking to relocate its forces and move some installations farther away, but stressed that geographical distance would not place them beyond the reach of Iran's Armed Forces.

"Wherever the bases are stationed, they will be within the reach of Iran's Armed Forces, if necessary," he said, adding that coordinated operations had also enabled Iran to strike designated targets at sea and compel the opposing side to retreat.

The senior commander has also called for a broader strengthening of Iran's defense preparedness, emphasizing that national power depends not only on military hardware but also on public trust, social resilience, national unity and collective determination.

In a message marking Basij Week, Abdollahi highlighted the force's role in national defense, crisis response and development. He called for greater investment in training skilled generations, expanding scientific and technological activities, supporting youth innovation, and strengthening service-oriented groups.

He said these priorities were consistent with the directives of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei, and the strategy of making Iran stronger and achieving absolute deterrence. He also described cooperation between the Armed Forces and popular capacities, particularly the Basij, as essential to comprehensive national preparedness.

Security arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz

Army spokesperson Brigadier General Mohammad Akraminia said on Wednesday that surveillance and control measures in the strategic waterway had been reinforced on the orders of the Army's commander-in-chief.

Addressing Air Force commanders and personnel, Akraminia said the readiness of Iran's Armed Forces, including the Army and the IRGC, had increased. He urged vessel operators and shipowners to coordinate passage through the strait with Iranian military authorities, warning that ships crossing without the required coordination faced heightened risks.

He said some vessels that had recently attempted to pass through the waterway without coordinating with Iranian forces had struck naval mines. The deployment of new monitoring systems, upgrades to existing equipment and improvements in operational structures had further enhanced Iran's surveillance capabilities, he added, noting that the measures would remain in place.

Akraminia also characterized the confrontation with Iran as a multidimensional hybrid war involving military, political and economic instruments. He said the United States was employing all three fronts, with the emphasis shifting according to circumstances and objectives.

The Army spokesperson further argued that the objectives behind the attacks on Iran extended beyond the nuclear, regional and missile issues cited by its adversaries, describing those issues as pretexts for broader aims. He said Iran's resistance and countermeasures had prevented its opponents from achieving their objectives.

The statements by Iran's senior security and military officials point to a continued emphasis on deterrence, operational readiness, alternative responses to external pressure, and tighter security oversight of the Strait of Hormuz. They also underscore Tehran's position that any further escalation would be met with a response from the country's military and security institutions.

Iran reports naval mine strikes on two tankers, downs US drones in Strait of Hormuz

From page 1 ▶ According to the statement, the vessels had attempted to navigate an 'unauthorized route,' apparently believing they could pass through the waterway undetected. Their attempts were halted after they struck the mines, resulting in explosions and extensive fires aboard the ships.

The IRGC Navy's Strait of Hormuz Traffic Control Center also issued a warning to vessel crews that disable their navigation and positioning systems, cautioning them against relying on statements by US officials or attempting to use unauthorized routes. It urged all vessels to heed maritime warnings and comply with designated navigation procedures, holding those that disregard the instructions responsible for the consequences.

Separately, the Iranian Army said its Air Defense Force had intercepted and destroyed two US drones over the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday night.

In a statement, the Army identified the aircraft as a Lucas drone and an MQ-9 unmanned aerial vehicle, saying they had been brought down in two separate operations using domestically developed air defense systems.

The Lucas drone was intercepted over the western part of the strait, while the MQ-9 was shot down over its eastern section. The Army said both operations were conducted as part of Iran's integrated air defense network, which coordinates surveillance, detection, and responses to aerial threats.

In another development, Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA) announced that it had added 26 tugboats to its non-compliance list for providing services to vessels that violated maritime regulations south of the Strait of Hormuz.

The authority said the tugboats had been identified through information supplied by citizens in Iran's southern neighboring countries and its own intelligence monitoring operations. The move followed reports that some tugboats had assisted vessels classified as non-compliant.

Reaffirming its previously announced policy, the PGSA warned that any vessel or company involved in providing services to non-compliant entities would itself be added to the list.

The announcements underscore Iran's emphasis on enforcing its maritime regulations and strengthening surveillance and control over vessel movements in and around the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategically important energy transit routes.

US-Israeli attacks have hampered Iran-IAEA cooperation: Chinese ambassador



From page 1 ▶ Cong said China would continue to advance its principled position at the IAEA Board of Governors and support Iran's legitimate positions.

Turning to regional developments, the Chinese envoy called on Tehran and Washington to resolve their differences through diplomacy and reach a comprehensive understanding on the Strait of Hormuz. He also underscored the need for a new regional security framework based on cooperation among countries in the region, saying Beijing supports initiatives aimed at reducing tensions and preventing another conflict.

Cong said China had recently stepped up its diplomatic engagement to promote regional stability. He cited the visit by Chinese Special Envoy Zhai Jun to Iran, Oman and Saudi Arabia, during which discussions addressed developments in Iran and Yemen, as well as proposals for regional security arrangements.

Beijing, he added, supports a political solution to the Yemen crisis while safeguarding the Arab country's territorial integrity.

The ambassador also highlighted the longstanding ties between Tehran and Beijing, describing their relationship as rooted in more than 2,000 years of historical connections. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of their comprehensive strategic partnership, he noted, expressing confidence that practical cooperation between the two countries would continue to expand.

Cong further said China was ready to share its development and governance experience with Iran and other countries. He described the Belt and Road Initiative as consistent with Beijing's efforts to promote regional peace and stability, adding that its advancement could contribute to greater security across the region.

Iran will become a graveyard for aggressors, says MP



TEHRAN – Iran is neither afraid of war nor willing to ignore its national dignity at the negotiating table, Deputy Parliament Speaker Hamidreza Haji Babaei said on Wednesday, stressing that the country would respond decisively to any act of aggression.

Addressing an online parliamentary session on November 25, Haji Babaei outlined three priorities: national resistance and defense, economic and livelihood concerns, and a foreign policy based on dignity and strength.

On security matters, he said Iran was better prepared than before to confront potential threats and warned that any renewed aggression would be met with a sustained response.

"Iran is not the initiator of war, but it will become a graveyard for aggressors," he said, adding that those who started a conflict would not be able to determine how it ended.

The lawmaker also highlighted the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz to global energy markets, arguing that Iran's position in the waterway and the broader regional balance of power were significant factors in the calculations of its adversaries.

Haji Babaei said Iran would not yield to pressure or coercion and reaffirmed the country's commitment to a diplomatic approach grounded in dignity, wisdom and prudence.

He said Iran would not retreat from its position until its seven conditions were met, and the other side approached negotiations with seriousness, rationality and respect.

"The world cannot be governed by force, and nations cannot be silenced through threats," he said.

The Silicon Valley kill chain

Iran urges UN oversight as CENTCOM's open embrace of military AI raises fears of automated war and civilian harm

From Page 1 ▶ The format mattered as much as the words. The Council debate was convened specifically on conflict resolution in an era of rapid technological change, a theme pushed by a growing number of member states worried about autonomous weapons, cyber operations and AI-enabled decision-making.

Iran used that platform to link three arguments: first, that technology must remain under inclusive, intergovernmental governance centered on the United Nations, not limited or selective processes; second, that the use of AI in targeting increases the likelihood of unlawful strikes; and third, that outsourcing critical military functions to private tech firms does not remove legal responsibility from states.

Tehran's position, as presented by Darzi, is that the security and military dimensions of AI must be addressed within the UN framework with participation of all states. That call echoes long-standing demands from the Global South for a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons, so far resisted by major military powers.

From Project Maven to Maven Smart System

At the heart of the controversy is Maven. Originally launched by the Pentagon in 2017 as the Algorithmic Warfare Cross-Functional Team, Project Maven was designed to accelerate the adoption of machine learning for intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance, particularly analysis of drone video and geospatial intelligence.

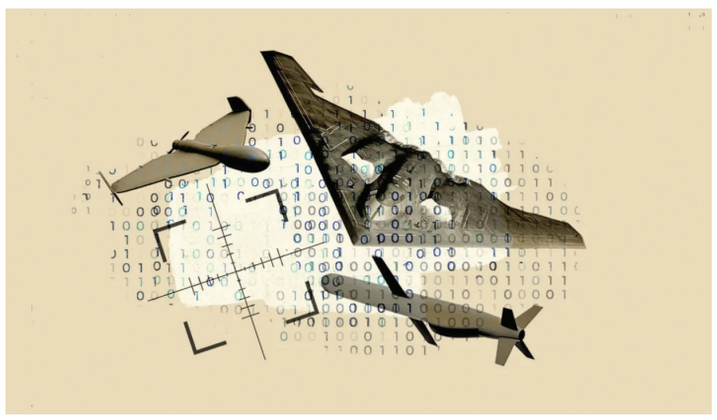
Google was an early contractor but withdrew in 2018 after employee protests. Palantir then became the prime systems integrator for what is now called the Maven Smart System (MSS), a Pentagon-wide software platform that fuses intelligence from dozens — by some accounts more than 150 to 179 distinct data sources — into a single operational picture.

According to analyses by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Pentagon statements, MSS is now described as production-level across almost all U.S. combatant commands, including CENTCOM, EUCOM, INDOPACOM, and others, as well as NATO's Allied Command Operations, which acquired MSS NATO in March 2025.

MSS does not fire weapons itself. Palantir stresses that humans remain responsible for selecting and approving targets. What it does, according to company documentation and U.S. officials, is collapse a workflow that once required eight or nine separate systems into one interface: computer-vision models detect objects in satellite or drone imagery, data-fusion tools cross-reference signals intelligence, open-source information and classified military databases, and recommendation algorithms propose and rank candidate targets and even suggest which munition or platform to use.

CENTCOM, under commanders including Gen. Michael Kurilla and later Adm. Brad Cooper, became the most aggressive early adopter. After the Oct. 7, 2023 attacks, CENTCOM shifted Maven from exercises such as Scarlet Dragon to real combat use. By early 2024, officials said Maven had supported more than 85 airstrikes in Iraq, Syria and Yemen and helped locate rocket launchers and Red Sea vessels.

Iran was different in scale. During the first 24 hours of what



the Pentagon called Operation Epic Fury, the United States used MSS to help strike more than 1,000 targets, a tenfold increase over what was possible in the pre-MSS era, according to CSIS. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy reported more than 1,000 targets in the first 24 hours and more than 13,000 targets over 38 days, with AI-enabled systems fusing hundreds of intelligence sources to generate recommendations at unprecedented speed.

Claude inside the kill chain

If Maven is the chassis, Claude was described as part of its reasoning layer. In 2024, Palantir partnered with Anthropic to integrate Claude models into Palantir's Artificial Intelligence Platform running on Amazon Web Services, including on classified networks. By late 2024, the Pentagon began integrating Claude into Maven workflows to help process data and support decisions.

Defense analysts describe Claude not as the sensor that spots a building, but as a sophisticated interface that synchronizes other modules, summarizes intelligence, drafts assessments and helps operators navigate vast data. As The Economist's defense editor Shashank Joshi and Defense One have explained, the targeting process still formally runs through stages: build a database of possible targets and no-strike lists, vet with intelligence agencies, apply legal review, produce air tasking orders, execute and assess battle damage. MSS with Claude, officials say, compresses at least some of those stages from days or hours into seconds.

CENTCOM Commander Adm. Brad Cooper said in March 2026 that American forces were using advanced AI tools to process information and accelerate military decision-making. A sworn Pentagon court filing on 15 June 2026, cited by Darzi and reported by U.S. media, went further, stating that a Grok Gov model operating through the Department's Maven Smart Systems enabled U.S. forces to deploy over 2,000 munitions to 2,000 distinct targets within 96 hours.

Other firms were also in the stack. Anduril's Lattice system is reported to have integrated sensor data to support situational awareness, while AWS provided cloud infrastructure. But in Tehran's narrative — and in much Western coverage — two names dominate: Palantir as the system integrator and Anthropic as the model provider.

Anthropic's position has since become complicated. The company, which publicly emphasizes AI safety, confirmed in July 2025 that Claude had been integrated into classified government workflows through Palantir. By 2026, some public program histories list Anthropic as having withdrawn from Maven contracting, amid internal and public debate about use of its models in lethal targeting. The company has said Claude does not directly provide targeting recommendations but helps with analysis, a distinction critics say collapses in practice when analysis flows directly into a kill chain.

2,000 munitions in 96 hours: speed beyond human review?

The figure cited by Darzi — 2,000 munitions on 2,000 targets in 96 hours — is central to Iran's legal and humanitarian argument. Even if technically accurate, Tehran and independent arms-control researchers ask, can meaningful human review survive that tempo?

U.S. officials present speed as a virtue and a necessity. Adm. Cooper and the Pentagon's Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Officer have argued that AI helps planners do days of work in seconds and move faster than adversaries can react. Palantir Chief Technology Officer Shyam Sankar reportedly called the Iran campaign the first major AI-driven war.

Critics, including Defense One and former Pentagon officials, warn of the opposite effect: the speed of target acquisition can overwhelm the ability to verify targets. DOD policy still requires that all targets be selected by humans, but human approval can become perfunctory — a "rubber stamp" — when operators face hundreds of AI-generated recommendations, contradictory intelligence and time pressure.

That concern is not theoretical. Modern targeting depends on authoritative military intelligence databases that describe the function of buildings, combined with live feeds. If a database entry is outdated, if open-source data on civilian movement is missing, or if operators expect the software to flag inconsistencies that it was never designed to catch, errors propagate faster than before.

Darzi's claim is precisely that: that Maven and Claude were used to analyze intelligence, identify and prioritize targets and provide coordinates for the Feb. 28 strikes, thereby compressing the decision cycle to a point where human review could not keep pace. U.S. investigations into specific civilian-casualty incidents, discussed below, suggest at least some CENTCOM personnel shared that expectation gap.

The Minab tragedy and the question of accountability

No incident has focused the debate more than the strike on a girls' school in Minab. According to Bloomberg, Pentagon investigators found that flawed intelligence, outdated imagery and overreliance on AI contributed to a missile strike that killed more than 120 children, while other reports put total casualties at 175. A Tomahawk missile struck the school after the site, with an uncorrected classification as a military facility, was fed into Maven along with other potential targets.

Bloomberg, citing officials involved in the investigation, reported that inside CENTCOM, some personnel relied too much on the AI embedded in Maven Smart System and expected it to flag stale information or inconsistencies. Palantir, the report said, subsequently built new capabilities into Maven to re-review underlying intelligence to identify disqualifying factors and flag inaccuracies human review may have missed. The Pentagon's Maven office also added open-source feeds to better track civilian movement and refined workflows for refreshing and vetting planned targets.

Drone Wars UK and other monitoring groups have argued the Minab case illustrates a broader pattern also seen in Gaza and elsewhere: AI-assisted targeting that drafts legal justifications and battle-damage assessments within the same interface risks normalizing rapid approval.

For Tehran, Minab is evidence of a war crime enabled by algorithm. For Washington, according to official statements, it was a tragic failure of process that prompted reforms, not proof the system is inherently unlawful. For international lawyers, it raises the key test under international humanitarian law: distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack. Who is responsible when a database is wrong, the software does not catch it, and a human approves within seconds?

Darzi anticipated the corporate defense. Private-sector involvement, he said, cannot absolve states of responsibility. That mirrors the position of many legal scholars: under the law of state responsibility, conduct directed or controlled by a state remains attributable to it, even if implemented through contractors, and obligations under the UN Charter and Geneva Conventions cannot be outsourced.

Palantir has repeatedly said its software does not make lethal decisions and that the government retains primary responsibility for the quality of information fed into Maven. Anthropic has emphasized its safety policies and use-case restrictions. Neither company has accepted liability for specific strikes. That leaves families of victims, in Iran and elsewhere, with little clarity on where to seek remedy — a gap Tehran now seeks to exploit diplomatically.

Who governs military AI? Iran's call for UN oversight

The final part of Darzi's speech looked forward. He called for the security and military dimensions of AI to be addressed within the UN through an inclusive intergovernmental process, rather than limited initiatives led by tech-exporting states.

That demand lands in a crowded diplomatic field. Talks under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons on lethal autonomous weapons systems have dragged on for a decade without a binding treaty. The U.S. has promoted a Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of AI and2019 Department of Defense AI ethical principles, emphasizing human judgment, while rejecting a preemptive ban. China, Russia, the EU, the African Group and others have advanced competing proposals.

Iran's intervention adds a new precedent: a state that says it has been on the receiving end of full-scale AI-enabled warfare demanding accountability after the fact, not just preventive rules. Tehran is effectively asking the Council to treat AI-enabled targeting the way it once treated aerial bombing or drones — as a method of warfare that must be measured against the Charter's prohibition on aggression and IHL's protection of civilians.

Iran, China, Russia, Belarus and Cuba condemn any move to weaponize outer space

From Page 1 ▶ The statement expressed grave concern over Washington's acknowledgment of possessing such weapons, describing the development as a dangerous step toward the weaponization of outer space and a serious threat to longstanding international efforts to prevent an arms race in this domain.

The five countries also warned against military doctrines that portray outer space as a potential theater of warfare, saying recent developments underscore the need for collective action to prevent it from becoming an arena of military confrontation.

They strongly condemned any activity aimed at placing weapons in outer space and rejected attempts to normalize such practices, urging all countries to refrain from deploying weapons in orbit or taking actions that could trigger an arms race.

The joint statement further raised concerns over the growing use of space-related capabilities for undeclared purposes, warning that such activities could undermine the stability, safety, security and continuity of space operations, as well as their long-term sustainability.

Reaffirming the applicability of international law, including the UN Charter and the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the five countries stressed the need to strengthen the existing legal framework to prevent an arms race in outer space.

They called for negotiations on a comprehensive, effective, non-discriminatory and multilaterally verifiable legally binding international instrument prohibiting the placement of weapons in outer space, as well as the threat or use of force against space objects or through their use.

The statement identified the revised draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT), submitted by China and Russia, as well as the substantive report of the Group of Governmental Experts established under UN General Assembly Resolution 77/250, as useful foundations for further negotiations.



While acknowledging the value of transparency and confidence-building measures, the five countries emphasized that such measures cannot replace legally binding commitments.

They also reaffirmed the importance of the international initiative under which states pledge not to be the first to place weapons of any kind in outer space, encouraging all countries, particularly those with advanced space capabilities, to consider making such a commitment.

Calling on the working group to address the latest developments with the urgency they require, the five countries urged it to advance substantive recommendations to prevent the deployment of weapons in outer space.

They concluded by stressing that preserving outer space for peaceful purposes is a shared responsibility of the international community and that the placement of weapons in orbit must not be allowed to create a new reality or undermine collective efforts to prevent an arms race in this domain.

A crown forged from lies and genocide

By Atrin Eskandari

TEHRAN - On Tuesday, 17 November, Isaac Herzog, president of the Israeli regime, told Reza Pahlavi during a webinar hosted by Ben-Gurion University that he hoped, once the Islamic Republic had been dismantled, to see "His Highness", no less, return home. Gila Gamliel, a Likud minister in Netanyahu's cabinet, also spoke at the event. This is the same minister whose social media posts, according to the Israeli press, were amplified by a network of fake pro-Pahlavi accounts.

Set that scene alongside an investigation published by the French daily Le Figaro. Citing researchers and disinformation specialists, Stanislas Poyet, the paper's correspondent in al-Quds, wrote that coordinated campaigns to fuel unrest in Iran and raise Reza Pahlavi's profile bore the "fingerprints" of the Israeli regime. According to analysts cited in the report, more than 95 per cent of the accounts on X that sport a crown emoji are fake. Nor is this the first report of its kind. As for the clown without the crown himself, he has previously sung the praises of the genocidal Israeli regime and warned Western governments against striking any deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to Le Figaro and numerous researchers in the field, Tel Aviv has been investing heavily for years in what has come to be known as "algorithmic diplomacy". What ought to concern Western citizens is that this interference online, particularly on social media, comes at a price, and that price will ultimately be paid out of their own pockets.

How, exactly, do Europeans and Americans end up footing the bill for a rigged feed?

The manipulation of social media, right down to the likes bought for the crownless clown, convinced some Western policymakers and opinion-makers that Iranians genuinely supported Pahlavi. The thinking went like this: attack Iran, and its people would rush into the arms of a clown and put him in place of the Islamic Republic, a political system rooted in the people themselves.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran condemns Israeli attacks on Lebanon

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned Israeli airstrikes and artillery attacks on southern Lebanon, as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure, reaffirming Lebanon's inherent right to defend its territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the ministry said the escalation of Israeli aggression against Lebanon, coinciding with the country's Independence Day celebrations, constituted a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and the November 2024 ceasefire agreement.

The statement described Israel as the greatest threat to Lebanon's independence, territorial integrity, security and stability.

It also stressed that Israel's grave international crimes, including genocide and serious violations of international law in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and other countries across the region, warranted a decisive response from the United Nations and the international community.

The ministry criticized the United States for preventing effective international action, describing Washington as Israel's principal supporter and accomplice. It said the UN Security Council's inaction over Israel's occupation of large parts of Lebanese territory and its continued attacks had undermined the council's credibility and emboldened further violations of international law.

The statement also condemned 'US interference in Lebanon's internal affairs,' warning against Washington's efforts to establish mechanisms without national consensus.

Such initiatives, it said, would neither safeguard Lebanon's national rights and interests nor prevent Israeli occupation, expansionism, aggression and terrorism. Instead, they could pose serious risks to the country's independence, security, stability and national cohesion.

Concluding its statement, the Foreign Ministry praised the Lebanese people for their steadfastness in confronting Israeli military aggression and expansionism, reaffirming the Islamic Republic's support for Lebanon in its efforts to safeguard its independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Free trade agreement removes 87% of Iran-EAEU trade tariffs



TEHRAN – The implementation of a free trade agreement between Iran and the five member states of the Eurasian Economic Union has opened new opportunities for Iranian exporters, with officials highlighting the potential for export growth, market diversification and the formation of specialized export consortia.

The agreement was discussed at a meeting of the Eurasia working group held at Tehran's permanent international exhibition center, attended by officials from the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), business representatives and leading manufacturers. Participants examined ways to expand trade, move beyond traditional markets and increase value-added exports.

Seyed Mohammad Sadegh Ghanadzadeh, TPO deputy for trade services, said the government was pursuing targeted support for trade with the Eurasian region.

He stressed the need to make full use of the free trade agreement, the capabilities of commercial counsellors and the region's active trade centers to facilitate and increase bilateral exchanges. He also announced an agreement to establish a joint working group to identify investment opportunities and develop trade infrastructure.

Elham Haji-Karimi, director of the TPO's Office of Trade Agreements and International Organizations, said the free trade agreement had taken effect in May 2025.

Under the deal, 87 percent of tariff lines between Iran and the five-member bloc — Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia — have been eliminated. The agreement also includes 11 specialized chapters covering standards, customs, rules of origin and government procurement, helping reduce non-tariff barriers, she said.

Haji-Karimi added that Iran's exports to the Eurasian region grew by 80 percent in the first year of implementing the preferential trade agreement and increased 2.5-fold over the period, demonstrating the market's potential.

Mehdi Babaei, director general of the TPO's Office of Central Asia, Russia and the Caucasus, said Iranian exports to the Caucasus had risen 19 percent despite logistical challenges.

He called for greater geographical diversification and efforts to move beyond traditional markets, saying specialized consortia and export holding companies could prevent destructive competition and price undercutting while significantly strengthening Iranian exporters' bargaining power in target markets.

The meeting also highlighted the importance of producing higher-value goods, adopting modern marketing tools and artificial intelligence, and completing production and distribution chains to strengthen the country's export capacity.

1st non-bank public joint-stock guarantee fund receives preliminary approval

TEHRAN – Iran's National Financing Council has granted preliminary approval, subject to certain conditions, for the establishment of the country's first privately owned, publicly traded non-bank guarantee fund, the Economy Ministry said.

The decision was made at the council's 29th meeting, chaired by the minister of economic affairs and finance, where a proposal to establish a non-governmental guarantee fund operating at the national level was reviewed.

Under the resolution, the fund will primarily issue guarantees and serve as a guarantor for securities offerings.

It is the first public joint-stock guarantee institution to receive preliminary approval from the National Financing Council. According to the Economy Ministry, the fund will raise capital through a stock market subscription offering after meeting the requirements set by the Securities and Exchange Organization.

The initiative aims to expand non-bank financing capacity and reduce businesses' reliance on guarantees issued by the banking system.

Limited access to bank guarantees has been among the obstacles preventing businesses from using capital market instruments to raise funds. Establishing non-bank guarantee institutions could provide an alternative way to meet this need, the ministry said.

At the same meeting, the council also reviewed a draft directive on the issuance of guaranteed securities, as stipulated in the Law on Financing Production and Infrastructure.

After considering expert opinions and members' comments, the council approved the general framework of the proposed directive.

Guaranteed securities are among the instruments provided for under the law and are designed to establish a structured mechanism for backing financial obligations. They allow guarantees to be issued with different maturities, in line with the payment schedules of applicants.

Registration and tracking mechanisms for the securities are also expected to improve transparency and monitoring of guarantee obligations, while enabling the assessment and ranking of issuers based on their record of meeting commitments.

The development of these instruments, alongside the establishment of non-bank guarantee funds, could diversify guarantee mechanisms, increase the capacity for securities issuance and facilitate corporate financing, provided the necessary regulatory and operational requirements are met.

More than 1,000 km of road projects expected to open by Mar. 2026

TEHRAN – Iran plans to bring more than 1,000 kilometers of road construction projects into operation by the end of the current Iranian year in March 2027, an official with the Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructure Company said.

Mohammadreza Khodakhodazadeh, acting deputy for planning at the company, told Tasnim News Agency that more than 850 kilometers of road projects were initially scheduled to be completed and opened this year.

However, based on the progress of contractors' work, the total length of projects expected to open could exceed 1,000 kilometers by the end of the year, he said.

Around 6,000 to 7,000 kilometers of road projects are currently under construction across the country, Khodakhodazadeh added, expressing hope that between 850 and more than 1,000 kilometers would be completed this year.

He said about 80 percent of the projects were located along transport corridors.

Iranian pavilion features 41 companies at Erbil's Agro Pack exhibition

ERBIL – Iran has opened a national pavilion featuring 41 Iranian companies at the ninth Erbil International Agro Pack Exhibition, providing an opportunity to showcase domestic production capabilities, strengthen trade ties with businesses in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and expand the presence of Iranian products in the Iraqi market, Iran's commercial attaché in Erbil said.

The exhibition opened on Monday, Nov. 23, 2026, in the presence of officials from the Kurdistan Region and representatives of foreign diplomatic missions based there.

Azad Bartani said around 300 local and international companies were taking part in the event, presenting products and their latest achievements in the food, agriculture and packaging sectors.



He said the Iranian pavilion was among the exhibition's notable sections, with participating companies offering a wide range of products, including food items, nuts and dried fruits, beverages, dairy products, industrial machinery, packaging equipment and materials, foil, paper, cardboard, packaging films, glass containers and bottles.

Bartani said participation in specialized exhibitions in Iraq provided Iranian companies with an opportunity to showcase their manufacturing capabilities, identify business opportunities and strengthen commercial ties with economic operators in the Kurdistan Region and across Iraq.

The exhibition also allows Iranian companies to hold direct talks with local importers and distributors, potentially paving the way for expanded trade cooperation and greater market access for Iranian products, he added.

He said the diversity of products displayed at the pavilion would help introduce Iran's industrial and manufacturing capacities to Iraqi businesses and identify areas for joint cooperation.

The ninth Erbil International Agro Pack Exhibition runs until Thursday, Nov. 26, and brings together businesspeople, traders and other stakeholders in the food, agriculture and packaging industries.

Fuel supplies to power plants rise from last year, acting oil minister says

TEHRAN – Deliveries of fuel to power plants have increased compared with the same period last year, with supplies of both natural gas and liquid fuels being provided according to schedule, Acting Oil Minister Hamid Bovard said on Tuesday.

Gas and liquid fuel supplies to power plants were being fully maintained, and the overall volume of equivalent fuel delivered to the facilities had risen, Bovard said, according to the Oil Ministry's Shana news agency.

He said natural gas deliveries to power plants had increased year on year, while supplies of diesel fuel had also risen over the same period.

Bovard said the scheduled supply of equivalent fuel to power plants would continue.

He also said 50 percent of the capacity of South Pars refineries damaged in recent incidents had returned to production.

Industries allocated 161 mcm of gas for remaining months of year

TEHRAN – Iran has allocated 161 million cubic meters (mcm) of natural gas to industries for the remaining months of the year (Iranian calendar year ends in late March 2026) under a decision by the Supreme Energy Council, the spokesman for the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade said.

Ezzatollah Zare'i said the allocation followed a proposal by the ministry to the council, adding that gas quotas for individual industries had been determined according to their priorities, consumption needs and role in the production chain.

In addition to natural gas, plans approved by the council provide for 750 mcm of alternative fuel and 16,550 megawatts of electricity for industrial users, he said.

Zare'i said industries had been assigned gas quotas based on their importance and economic impact across production chains. Some sectors, including cement producers, had been encouraged to switch to alternative fuels and would therefore receive smaller gas allocations.

Industries with a greater role in production chains and a stronger economic impact, as well as those facing greater difficulty in using alternative fuels, would receive larger gas quotas, he added.

Zare'i expressed hope that the allocation plan would help industries avoid energy supply problems during the coming winter months.

National Iranian Gas Company said on Tuesday that the company delivered 706 mcm of natural gas to its national network over the past 24 hours, with 55 percent consumed by households, commercial users and small industries.

Of the total volume delivered on November 24, 2026, 388 mcm went to the residential, commercial and small-industries sectors, according to the company, as reported by IRIB.

The company said these users accounted for about 55 percent of total gas supplied to the national network.

It also urged households to reduce consumption through simple measures, including wearing warmer clothing, covering and closing air-conditioner vents and using thick curtains.

5,000 meters of mining exploratory excavation planned across 4 provinces

TEHRAN – A total of 5,000 meters of exploratory excavation is planned in four Iranian provinces to identify new mineral deposits, with support from the Mineral Activities Investment Insurance Fund, the fund's chief executive said.

Ali Khatibi said four exploration projects in Kerman, Kermanshah, Semnan and South Khorasan provinces had entered a new phase of geological studies and exploration operations with the fund's backing.

The projects aim to identify and assess mineral reserves, complete geological surveys and prepare for further exploration, he said.

The areas under investigation cover metallic minerals, copper, natural bitumen and coal, spanning a combined area of about 25,368.5 square kilometers.

The projects include 5,000 meters of core drilling, with planned depths of up to 1,500 meters, as well as 800 cubic meters of trenching, Khatibi said.

The work will also involve geological mapping, sampling, chemical analysis and additional studies to assess geological structures and identify evidence of mineralization.

Khatibi said the exploration areas were located in less-developed parts of the four provinces, adding that identifying new reserves could help unlock economic potential, expand mining activity and create opportunities for regional development.

He described exploration as the first link in the mining value chain and one of the sector's riskiest investment stages, citing high costs, specialized operations and geological uncertainties.

Insurance and financial support could help reduce some of those risks, he said, adding that exploration studies would improve geological data, reduce uncertainty over mineral reserves and provide a technical basis for decisions on subsequent mine development.

The fund aims to support eligible projects, facilitate financing and reduce investment risks to help expand the country's mining capacity and ensure the systematic development of mineral resources, Khatibi said.

Steel production continues despite 80% energy restrictions

TEHRAN – Iran's steel producers have continued operations despite facing electricity restrictions of around 80 percent over the past five to six months, relying on their own power plants and purchases from the open market to meet part of their energy needs, the head of the Iranian Steel Producers Association said.

Bahram Sobhani told IRIB that the steel industry had faced both power cuts and restrictions, as well as several-fold increases in electricity and gas tariffs in recent years, adding that both factors had affected production costs and operations.

He said almost all major steel companies are listed on the stock market, meaning changes in energy supply conditions and costs directly affect their financial statements, profitability and share values.

Sobhani said steelmakers had used their own power plants to offset part of the electricity shortfall and purchased additional supplies from the open market.

Buying electricity through the Energy Exchange at prices of 100,000 to 150,000 rials per kilowatt-hour has imposed a significant cost burden on steel companies and affected their financial performance, he added.

He said the industry had not faced major restrictions on gas supplies in recent months, but warned that colder weather could bring renewed concerns over gas availability.

Criticizing the sale of electricity and gas to industries through the Energy Exchange at prices several times higher than regulated rates, Sobhani questioned why some energy supplies were being sold at higher prices through the exchange when domestic demand could be met.

The steel industry is being hit both by energy supply restrictions and rising prices, he said, rejecting claims that steelmakers benefit from substantial energy subsidies. He added that electricity and gas tariffs for Iranian steel producers were comparable to, and in some cases higher than, those in steel-producing countries along the Persian Gulf.

Sobhani said Iran required more than 800 million cubic meters of gas per day and had faced shortages last year. Some energy facilities were also damaged this year, with commitments made to compensate for the losses.

He warned that failure to address the gas shortfall could also affect electricity generation, as a significant share of the country's power is produced using natural gas. He added that the steel industry is among the first sectors to face restrictions when energy supplies are curtailed.

On the production outlook, Sobhani said three major steelmakers — Mobarakeh Steel, Khuzestan Steel and Sepiddasht — which were damaged during the war, had resumed operations through the efforts of domestic specialists and were now operating at nearly their previous levels.

He said their return to production in such a short period was a significant achievement, adding that Iran was expected to rank 10th globally in monthly steel production during the second half of the current Iranian year and maintain that position throughout next year.

Israeli politicians feign outrage over settler attacks while expanding land theft and war

From page 1 In June settlers set up an outpost in Area B about a kilometer from Zahran's land. For five months his family could not reach their farm room. On November 10, a High Court ruling granted the village two days of army-coordinated harvesting, and Zahran set out with his brothers.

About 20 settlers met them with stones, smashed the family truck and a four-wheeler, and slashed the tires. He saw no soldiers. Police never came, despite repeated calls.

The next day, soldiers were present but held farmers back until about 9 a.m., showed them a map of permitted areas, and ordered them out by 2:30 p.m. Their lawyer, Ghiyath Nasser, says villagers could reach under a third of the land, leaving Zahran about 20 of his 120 trees.

In the farm room he found his belongings stolen or smashed, settlers watering sheep at the two wells he had restored, and last year's saplings dead of thirst.

After Nasser's first petition, the army twice demolished the outpost, and settlers twice rebuilt it. The army then declared the site a closed military zone for Israelis only.

In theory, that is supposed to oblige soldiers to keep settlers out. Wail Qut, a lawyer with the Jerusalem (al-Quds) Legal Aid and Human Rights Center, says the practice runs the other way.

"Sometimes they declare an area closed to settlers, but in the application they close it to Palestinians," he said.

Madama, south of Nablus, shows the sequence in reverse. The army gated the road to as much as a third of the village's land about five years ago, and the High Court dismissed a petition.

Last April an outpost of about 10 caravans appeared inside the closed area, and the gate began opening for settlers.

Dror Etkes of Kerem Navot says this is routine. "There is no vacuum in the West Bank," he said. A July report from his group and Peace Now found that farm outposts effectively controlled more than 1 million dunams, about 18 percent of the territory, by the end of 2025.



A raided wedding and a sealed plain

In al-Mughayyir, northeast of Ramallah, the outposts arrived first. Council member Marzouq Abu Naim says the first one appeared on the eastern plain in 2018 at 200 dunams and has grown to 5,000, with a dozen now around the village.

About 80 percent of its 43,000 dunams lies beyond the eastern entrance, closed for years, and villagers can move freely on only about 900. Abu Naim's son Jihad, 32, was shot dead by a settler during an invasion of the village school in April.

On November 13, a settler's word was enough to end a wedding.

A settler grazing his flock inside a closed military zone claimed someone from al-Mughayyir had thrown firecrackers or shot at him. He was unhurt. Soldiers took his word, sealed the village and raided it.

Samir Abu Alia, a council member, says about 20 army jeeps surrounded the wedding hall and soldiers threw stun grenades between the men and the women.

The groom, Hassan Abu Alia, was taken from his bride for two hours, and Abu Alia says he was beaten. Attendees deny there were gunshots or firecrackers.

After a shooting wounded an Israeli teenager in August 2025, the army ordered olive trees beside a settler road cleared as a security threat, and settlers joined in.

Locals say more than 10,000 trees were uprooted. The closure order that followed bars anyone without a permit, settlers included, and has been extended through December.

Yesh Din says it is enforced only against owners, and lawyer Lior Zur says the military turns closure orders into "a mechanism for transferring possession of land from its lawful Palestinian owners to settler trespassers."

Arson, raids and a razed village

Overnight into Sunday, settlers burned seven cars in Kafr Malik, three in Deir Abu Mashaal and two in Deir al-Sudan, spraying racist slogans on homes, Wafa reported.

Near Hizma, soldiers fired live rounds at laborers crossing the separation wall, wounding several and detaining about 18.

On Sunday, Israeli forces demolished every structure in Khirbet Samra, one of the last herding communities in the northern Jordan Valley, including homes, animal shelters and water and power lines.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel says more than 20 of those structures had never received a demolition order, yet Judge Ruth Ronnen declined an injunction that would have let families rebuild before winter.

Settlers shot dead an elderly woman and wounded ten others near Jericho on November 17.

Tuesday brought more raids: forces detained 17 Palestinians in Qalqilya, Nablus and Hebron and turned a Fatah office in Kafr Saba into a field interrogation site.

The UN says more than 400 settler attacks causing casualties or damage have been recorded since September, more than in any previous season.

PR damage control vs. unchecked terror on the ground

Facing some Western sanctions warnings, Israeli leaders staged a coordinated round of hollow condemnations this week to distance the regime from settler pogroms in the occupied West Bank.

At Monday's ELNET conference in al-Quds (Jerusalem), President Isaac Herzog called weekend arson attacks near Ramallah "despicable" and claimed they do "not represent Israel."

Hours later, Supreme Court President Yitzhak Amit, ruling on a petition from the besieged village of Burqa, termed the rampages a "systematic phenomenon," yet framed his objection around protecting Israel's global image, avoiding international sanctions, and safeguarding "the Zionist vision."

Although the court ordered the Central Command chief and West Bank police to submit enforcement affidavits by December 3, Burqa council head Sael Kanaan stressed that residents remain completely unprotected: "Not a day goes by without an attack."

Meanwhile, the Israeli establishment continues to shield colonial militias while pursuing genocide in Gaza and military aggression across Lebanon.

War Minister Israel Katz waited over a day to dismiss the arsonists as "a handful of rioters," deflecting responsibility onto an unworkable August directive shifting civil enforcement from the occupation army to the police, after having abolished administrative detention for Jewish Israelis in November 2024, a measure Israel still weaponizes against thousands of Palestinians.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran's power strategy: balancing maximum striking power with decentralized capabilities

From page 1 The risk, however, is that if the initial strikes fail to achieve their intended objectives, the attacker may be in a long confrontation, requiring additional resources and options that were not central to its original plan. Nevertheless, the success or failure of concentrated strikes is not determined by their intensity alone.

It also depends on the nature of the targets, the effectiveness of defensive systems, the targeted party's ability to absorb and recover from the strikes, and the extent to which actual military objectives are achieved. In contrast, Iran s strategy is based on the distribution and multiplication of its centers of gravity, making it more difficult for its enemy to achieve their objectives.

The ability to sustain itself is not dependent on a single center, institution or chain of command. Rather, military, security and political capabilities are distributed across multiple structures, with institutions capable of continuing to function even when certain centers come under attack.

According to this framework, this distribution operates across several levels. On the military level, this includes distributing capabilities in a way that reduces the impact of any single point within the system being targeted. On the security level, maintaining operational capacity despite infiltration and attempts to disrupt institutions.

On the political level, establishing multiple leadership structures capable of making decisions and continuing to govern the state under wartime conditions. On the popular level, maintaining a social and political base capable of providing support, depending on the nature of society and its response to the war.

On the industrial and economic level, developing the capacity to compensate for losses, sustain production and maintain the confrontation, rather than relying entirely on external supplies. The central idea is that multiplying centers of power makes it more difficult to achieve a rapid and decisive outcome, as it forces the enemy to contend with a much broader system rather than a limited number of fixed targets. This is what we refer to as horizontal distribution.

The explanation for Iran's ability to sustain itself does not lie solely in its organizational structures, distribution of capabilities or material resources. It also encompasses the political will underpinning this system. The existence of multiple institutions alone is insufficient to guarantee continuity, if the necessary will is absent or the capacity to make decisions deteriorates.

Conversely, willpower alone cannot compensate for a shortage of resources and capabilities. Therefore, what is described as the horizontal extension of centers of gravity depends on the integration of military, security, political and social elements, as well as the ability to operate across multiple fronts simultaneously.

This is what makes it difficult to subdue a state with deeply rooted institutions and the capacity to adapt. That is particularly when strikes fail to dismantle the underlying structures that enable it to endure. Iran does not deploy all its available cards simultaneously. Rather, it activates them gradually, in a manner that corresponds to developments in the confrontation.

This approach is viewed as an expression of strategic resource and capability management, based on retaining certain options and refraining from revealing the full extent of its capabilities during the initial stages. By contrast, relying on maximum-intensity strikes at the outset may result in using up a



substantial portion of offensive capabilities, making it more costly to sustain pressure if the anticipated results are not achieved.

However, the comparison between these two approaches should not be treated as an absolute rule. The ability to retain strategic options depends on the nature of the war, the extent to which capabilities are exposed to attack, the capacity to replenish them, and the enemy's success in adapting to new methods of applying pressure.

A number of factors come together to make the achievement of military and political objectives more complicated: multiple centers of power, the capacity to recover and replenish capabilities, decentralization, learning from experience, the availability of domestic support, and the ability to transfer pressure to other arenas.

Consequently, the combination of these elements makes the achievement of Western objectives in Iran exceptionally difficult. It may also lead to a transition from an attempt to impose a military victory towards seeking a political way out of the confrontation.

Nevertheless, the ultimate outcome will remain dependent on what actually unfolds on the ground, and on each side s ability to preserve its capabilities, withstand the costs and adapt its strategy as circumstances evolve.

White House Democratic hopeful calls Netanyahu a 'failed leader'

Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro says Netanyahu has 'led Israel down a dangerous, dark, isolated path'



TEHRAN – Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro who is eying 2028 White House bid has demanded accountability over the Israeli war on Gaza, faulting former President Joe Biden and President Donald Trump for not restraining Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Netanyahu is a failed leader," Shapiro told the Wall Street Journal. "He's led Israel down a dangerous, dark, isolated path," Israel Hayom reported.

The Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC), which has been threatened by Trump and his inner circle including Marco Rubio and some hawkish senators, has issued an arrest warrant against Netanyahu for war crimes and crimes against Netanyahu in Gaza.

Shapiro also attacked potential 2028 GOP rivals Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, saying they "both have the stink of Donald Trump on them. It's real hard to wash clean of that."

The Democratic governor also called for dismissal of War Secretary Pete Hegseth and an end to the war on Iran, saying: "Trump decided to go it alone. Didn't explain to the American people why he was doing it, and clearly, he and Hegseth and Vance have no idea how to get out."

The U.S. and Israel jointly launched an unprovoked and illegal war on Iran on Feb. 28. The war on Iran has affected the world economy as Iran retaliated by closing the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic transit route that accounts for a fifth of global energy supplies.

The potential presidential nominee also described Trump's Russia talks "an embarrassment to our country."

An observant Jew, Shapiro backs a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Following a failed July House amendment backed by over 100 Democrats to halt Israel military funding, Shapiro said Washington's influence went unused.

"I don't think that either the current president or President Biden used the leverage of the United States of America effectively to make sure that the weapons were being used in ways that comport with American values," Shapiro noted.

At a Friday Atlantic Council and NATO event in Philadelphia, Shapiro said Trump "actively worked to undermine Zelensky, and he has actively worked to coddle Putin."

In his talks with the WSJ, Shapiro went on to say that he is not "convinced that the next president alone can repair the damage Trump has done, and I think the reality is that it's going to take multiple generations to earn the trust of our allies again."

CIA and two other spy agencies hacked, unclassified data exposed

The intrusion is believed to have been carried out by hackers using artificial intelligence

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and at least two other spy agencies recently discovered a cybersecurity breach that exposed some of their unclassified information, according to U.S. officials and other people familiar with the matter.

The intrusions affected an open-source intelligence analysis system, a computer network that looks for intelligence insights in public, unclassified material, the people familiar with the issues said, the New York Times reported.

It was not clear specifically what information was compromised, but classified material was not jeopardized, the people said.

In addition to the CIA, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) were affected by the breach, according to two of the people, one of whom said the issue had been resolved.

ODNI, which oversees 17 U.S. intelligence agencies, including the CIA, has in recent years invested in open-source intelligence work, which is often unclassified.

The intrusion was believed to have been carried out by hackers who used an artificial intelligence hacking tool known as Artex, according to some of the people familiar with the matter.

The tool was made publicly available in July and was originally designed to aid organizations with cyberdefense, but it has been adapted by hackers to carry out cyberattacks, according to U.S. officials and security experts.

Investigators do not know who is responsible for the hack of the spy agencies' open-source system.

Open-source intelligence can include vast troves of commercially available data sets, social media content, satellite imagery and other online material. Much of it is publicly available, but it can include information sold by data vendors that can be highly revealing, especially when combined with other tranches of data.

Spy agencies can also use the data alongside other sources of intelligence to inform analytical judgments.

It is not uncommon for federal agencies to suffer cybersecurity breaches, but several have recently detected intrusions into some of their systems, prompting heightened concern among current and former U.S. intelligence officials.

The officials and others familiar with the matter spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive security matter that had not been made public.

An official with ODNI said there had been no disruptions to critical capabilities. The CIA declined to comment. NGA did not respond to a request for comment.

"There have been no disruptions to critical capabilities or classified systems," an ODNI official told CNN.

The episode coincides with a surge of technological disruptions, including a dayslong outage last week of the National Security Agency's internal classified network that officials and businesses said were not the result of cyberattacks. The problems have rattled the American public.

U.S. officials say that in some cases, artificial intelligence is uncovering software vulnerabilities that need to be quickly patched.

In this instance, it appears that a hacker gained unauthorized access to at least one government system.

It is just the most recent breach of government systems to surface recently.

Last week, President Trump appeared to confirm that the FBI's National Crime Information Center, a nationwide database used to swap information among local, state and federal law enforcement agencies about criminal suspects had recently been hacked.

"I will say that it's not good. I don't like that," Trump said on Saturday during a phone interview with Fox News when asked about the FBI breach, which CNN had reported earlier. The FBI is investigating the breach, according to people familiar with the matter.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

SPORTS

Iran into AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup 2026 semis

TEHRAN - Iran strode confidently into the semi-finals of the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2026 with a 6-0 win over Saudi Arabia on Wednesday.

The defending champions, who thoroughly controlled proceedings, will meet either Bahrain or Lebanon in their last four tie on Friday.

Mohammadali Hassanabad put Iran ahead two minutes into the match, connecting with keeper Mohammad Dastan's long throw to confidently head in from close range past a lunging Hassan Al Eid.

Ali Mirshekari saw his attempt go over while Sobhan Faleh's overhead kick was parried by Al Eid before Reza Dayeri closed the first period with a first-time attempt that went into the stands as the Central Asian side dominated without breaking a sweat. Ahmed Al Hamami volleyed wide in the 16th minute as Saudi Arabia attempted to have their say after the restart, the defender booting over his free-kick two minutes later.

Iran doubled their advantage in the 18th minute through a blistering free-kick from Mirshekari that gave Al Eid hardly any chance to react, and added to the scoreline four minutes later when Nazem smashed Dastan's lob with a first-time effort into the bottom left corner, the-afc.com reported.

Davoud Baghdabadi then forced Al Eid into a diving save with a fierce overhead kick in the 28th minute while Faleh and Movahed Mohammadpour, saw their efforts saved by Saleh Al Ajami, who took over from an injured Al Eid.

Al Ajami conceded in the 33rd minute, however, when Baghdabadi took the ball from Saudi Arabia's Ramzi Dakman and fired into the bottom right corner, and the keeper was again beaten when he failed to properly handle Hassanabad's overhead kick a minute later.

Faleh then closed the match with a free-kick that hit the sand and bounced beyond Al Ajami to send the four-time champions into the semi-finals.

Women's para taekwondo team stunned the world: Keshavarz

TEHRAN - Iran's women's para taekwondo head coach has expressed her delight at the country's historic world title, while emphasizing the importance of continued international competition to secure qualification points for the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles.

Iran's women's para taekwondo team made history at the 2026 World Para Taekwondo Championships in Muju, South Korea, claiming the women's team title for the first time. The Iranian squad secured two gold medals through Maryam Abdollahpour (K44 -57kg) and Aylar Jami (K44 -47kg), while Zahra Rahimi (K44 -52kg) added a silver.

The historic achievement was also reflected in the individual honors, with Atefeh Keshavarz named the world's best female coach and Maryam Abdollahpour receiving the award for the tournament's best female athlete.

Speaking exclusively to Tehran Times, Keshavarz said: "All three of our athletes have moved into the top six of the world rankings and are now serious contenders for qualification for the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles.

"I hope Abdollahpour and Rahimi can earn valuable ranking points at the Kazakhstan Grand Prix Final 2026, further strengthening their chances of securing their places in Los Angeles. We need to participate in all upcoming events through the end of 2027 to maintain our ranking positions. The World Championships carry 140 ranking points, making them more valuable than other events. These two gold medals have given our athletes a significant boost in the rankings."

Keshavarz also praised her athletes for their performances in both Nagoya and South Korea, highlighting the significance of competing at the world championships with three representatives for the first time.

"Our girls performed brilliantly in both Nagoya and South Korea. For the first time, we competed in a world event with three athletes, and we surprised everyone. For example, Brazil brought five athletes, four of whom had competed at the Paralympic Games. Turkey had a similar situation. In the final, Zahra Rahimi defeated a Mongolian opponent who has won three Paralympic gold medals. Our other athletes also faced Paralympic champions and runners-up," she said.

Keshavarz concluded by calling on the national federation and the National Paralympic Committee of Iran to provide continued support for the team's participation in international competitions through the end of 2027.

"I hope that, following our women's impressive medal performances, the federation and the National Paralympic Committee will support our participation in competitions through the end of 2027. This approach will give our athletes more valuable experience, help them compete with greater confidence and strengthen their belief that, having performed so well on the world stage, they can also achieve success at the Paralympic Games. However, this will require the support of both the federation and the National Paralympic Committee."

Iran defeat Thailand in 2026 Asian Women's Handball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Thailand 23-15 in the 2026 Asian Women's Handball Championship on Wednesday.

The tournament takes place in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from Nov. 23 to Dec. 3, 2026.

Iran have been drawn in Group A alongside Japan, China, Hong Kong and Bangladesh.

Team Melli started the campaign with a 33-16 win over Hong Kong and lost to China 34-32 in their second match.

Iran will face Japan on Nov. 28 in their last group-stage schedule.

Group B comprises South Korea, hosts Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, India, and Australia.

The top four teams will qualify for the 2027 World Women's Handball Championship.

Iran learn rivals at VNL 2027

TEHRAN - The host countries for 2027 Volleyball Nations League (VNL) are now confirmed, bringing the world's best national teams to arenas across four continents.

Iran will play Brazil, Russia, Japan, Bulgaria, Germany, and Argentina in Week 1 in Brazil.

To keep the competition balanced, teams are divided into groups of strength based on their FIVB World Ranking after the last VNL. Each team are then given opponents of equal overall strength across their 12 Preliminary Phase matches. Teams play four matches each week, so not every team in a pool will meet.

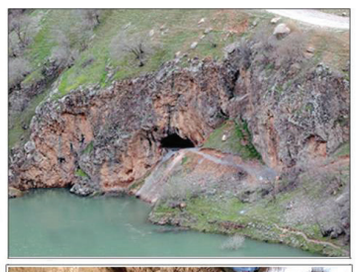
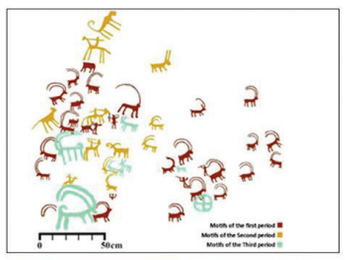
The FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League is an annual international volleyball competition contested by the senior men's national teams of the members of the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), the sport's global governing body.

The first tournament took place between May and July 2018, with the final taking place in Lille, France.

Russia won the inaugural edition, defeating France in the final.

The race for the title then heads to the men's Finals from 28 July to 1 August, where the VNL 2027 champions will be crowned.

Archaeological findings trace more than 70,000 years of human history in Hawraman




TEHRAN – Archaeological investigations in Sirwan Valley have uncovered evidence of human presence dating back more than 70,000 years, shedding light on the region's long history of human occupation and cultural development, a National Museum of Iran archaeologist said. The valley forms part of the Cultural Landscape of Oramanat/Hawraman, a UNESCO World Heritage site in western Iran.

Fereidoun Biglari, head of the museum's Paleolithic Department, presented the findings at a conference titled "Hawraman: The Cultural Landscape of Oramanat," held on Monday, November 23, at the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism.

In a presentation entitled "The Archaeological Landscape of the Sirwan Valley, with Emphasis on the Findings of the Salvage Excavations in the Darian Dam Area," Biglari reviewed the history of archaeological research in Hawraman, focusing on surveys and rescue excavations conducted in the area affected by the Darian Dam project.

Archaeological surveys carried out in 2015 and 2016 identified more than 70 archaeological and potential sites across the region. The discoveries included caves, rock shelters, open-air settlements, cemeteries, rock art sites, castles, bridges and an ancient mountain road, highlighting the archaeological diversity of the Sirwan Valley.

Of these locations, 16 sites threatened by the planned reservoir underwent salvage excavations. They included open-air sites, caves, rock shelters and cemeteries. The investigations uncovered evidence dating from the Middle and Upper Paleolithic and Epipaleolithic periods to the Middle and Late Chalcolithic, Iron Age, historical periods and the Middle and Late Islamic eras.

The findings provide evidence of more than 70,000 years of human presence in Hawraman, offering a long-term perspective on patterns of occupation and cultural development in the mountainous region.

However, Biglari said 22 identified sites and potential archaeological locations within the project area were eventually submerged after the Darian Dam reservoir was filled during the winter of 2015–2016. The submerged locations comprised nine confirmed archaeological sites and 13 potential sites.

He also outlined the scientific and research outcomes of the project, noting that its findings have so far been published in 20 articles in Persian, English and French.

The research was further discussed at the First National Conference on the Archaeology of Hawraman, held at the University of Kurdistan in 2018 and dedicated to the Darian Dam salvage excavations. The event featured 12 presentations covering subjects ranging from Paleolithic archaeology and early village communities to the Bronze and Iron Ages and later historical periods.

Other presentations examined the region's geology and geomorphology, archaeozoological evidence and ethnoarchaeological research.

The conference "Hawraman: The Cultural Landscape of Oramanat" was jointly organized by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism's Tourism Group and the Society of Iranian Architectural Notables. It brought together researchers, cultural heritage officials and members of the public for two panels examining the cultural landscape of Oramanat in Kurdistan and Kermanshah provinces.

The Sirwan Valley is part of the Cultural Landscape of Oramanat/Hawraman, which was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2021 during the organization's 44th World Heritage Committee session. The inscription brought Iran's total number of World Heritage properties to 26, recognizing the region's cultural and historical significance and its longstanding relationship with human communities.

Dafineh museum group, tourism ministry sign MoU to establish special handicrafts center



By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Dafineh museum group of the Mostazafan Foundation, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a special center for designing and producing handicrafts.

The agreement was signed in a ceremony on Wednesday by Hamidreza Soleimani, the museum group's CEO, and Barzin Zarghami, the deputy minister for handicrafts, with the aim of expanding cooperation in the handicrafts sector, supporting artisans and developing products inspired by museum artefacts.

The center, to be known as the National Alchemy of Iranian Art Centre (Kimia), is intended to connect Iran's museum heritage with contemporary handicraft production while creating new economic opportunities for craftspeople.

Addressing participants, Soleimani said the center aimed to turn museum collections and their cultural narratives into economically viable products for artisans.

He also pointed to the recent unveiling of the Kimia network platform in Mashhad, saying it would provide an online framework for artisans interested in collaborating with the initiative.

Speaking to the Tehran Times, Soleimani said that the center is aimed to establish a professional network of handicraft artists across the country through provincial initiatives.

Explaining the production strategy behind the Kimia brand, Soleimani said products would be developed based on the stories and significance of specific objects preserved in museums.

The approach is intended to create complementary value around the original artefacts while making their cultural and artistic narratives accessible to a wider audience, he explained.

"Kimia produces both functional and decorative handicrafts, including contemporary adaptations and smaller-scale reproductions inspired by notable objects and artworks in the Dafineh museum group's collections. Each product is accompanied by a story highlighting its historical, cultural or artistic significance, with the broader aim of introducing Iranian handicrafts to international markets."

Zarghami, for his part, said the agreement was part of efforts to make traditional crafts more accessible to the public and expand opportunities for artisans to market their work.

He stressed that support for handicrafts should extend beyond production to include sales, marketing and trade, noting that these stages are essential to bridging the gap between producers and consumers.

Unlike many other art forms, handicrafts are deeply rooted in rural communities and smaller towns rather than major urban centers, Zarghami said, adding that strengthening the sector's economic foundations could help revive parts of the local economy.

He underlined that the ministry had been seeking partnerships with other institutions capable of contributing to the revival and development of traditional crafts, and that the Mostazafan Foundation's readiness to establish the Kimia brand had provided an opportunity for cooperation.

Ahmad Mohit-Tabatabaei, a senior cultural heritage and museum expert, and former president of ICOM-Iran also attended the signing ceremony.

Tehran, Jakarta agree to pursue direct flights, finalize tourism cooperation deal

TEHRAN - Iran and Indonesia have agreed to pursue the development of direct flights between the two countries and expand cooperation in Halal tourism, as both sides move towards signing a bilateral tourism cooperation agreement.

The issues were discussed during a meeting between Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpei, Iran's deputy minister of tourism, and Ni Luh Enik Ermawati, Indonesia's deputy minister of tourism, on the sidelines of the 127th session of the UN Tourism's executive council in Abu Dhabi, Mehr news agency reported on Wednesday.

The two officials discussed ways to strengthen tourism relations, improve transport links and facilitate travel between the two countries. Support for establishing direct flights was highlighted as a key measure to improve accessibility and encourage greater tourist flows.

The meeting also addressed the restoration and maintenance of



the mausoleum of Al-Ghazali, aka Imam Mohammad Ghazali (c.1058 – 1111), who was a Muslim scholar and polymath.

Ermawati welcomed Iran's efforts concerning the historical and cultural site, stressing its potential role in strengthening the historical and cultural ties between the two countries.

The officials also explored pilgrimage routes for Indonesian visitors, with the aim of combining Iran's religious and cultural attractions with opportunities for broader tourism development.

Mohseni-Bandpei proposed inviting Indonesian tour operators, media representatives and travel influencers to Iran for familiarization tours. The initiative is intended to give Indonesian tourism professionals first-hand exposure to Iran's attractions, infrastructure and tourism products.

The proposal was welcomed by the Indonesian deputy minister, with both sides emphasizing the importance of joint promotional programs and closer engagement between tourism operators in the two countries.

Tourism cooperation agreement ready for signing

Finalizing a bilateral tourism cooperation agreement was another key item on the agenda.

Mohseni-Bandpei said Iran had completed its review of the draft agreement and submitted the text to Indonesia for final approval.

Ermawati said Indonesia had also finalized the text on its side and expressed hope that the agreement would be signed in the near future in the presence of the two countries' tourism ministers.

At the proposal of Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, Indonesia's tourism minister was invited to visit Iran and attend the upcoming Tehran International Tourism Exhibition. The visit could provide an opportunity to explore Iran's tourism capacities and facilitate the formal signing of the agreement.

Iran, Pakistan join hands to launch international vaccinology training course

TEHRAN – Iran and Pakistan have joined forces to launch an international vaccinology training course aimed at strengthening expertise in vaccine research, development, and production, attracting more than 2,000 applicants from 70 countries.

The six-week program, titled "Vaccinology: From Research and Development to Vaccine Production," was inaugurated on November 23 at the University of Karachi by Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, a 2021 Mustafa Prize laureate and Coordinator General of the Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMSTECH).

The course is being organized jointly by COMSTECH, the Pasteur Institute of Iran, and the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) at the University of Karachi. Around 100 researchers, students, and healthcare professionals are attending the program in person, while other participants are taking part online.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Choudhary emphasized the need for Islamic countries to invest in vaccine research and domestic manufacturing to reduce their dependence on foreign suppliers.

He said the COVID-19 pandemic had underscored the importance of scientific research, innovation, and local vaccine production, adding that OIC member states need to strengthen their research institutions, train skilled scientists, and gain access to advanced vaccine technologies.

Choudhary also expressed hope that the program would facilitate the exchange of scientific expertise, expand cooperation among participating research institutions, and create further training opportunities for young researchers.



Ehsan Mostafavi, head of the Pasteur Institute of Iran, highlighted the role of collaboration among research centers in advancing vaccine development. He noted that vaccine research and production require specialized knowledge across multiple disciplines, as well as appropriate scientific and technological infrastructure.

The six-week training program covers key areas of vaccinology, including immunology, vaccine design, and vaccine production technologies. It is scheduled to conclude on December 28, 2026, with a final examination.

About the Mustafa Prize

The Mustafa Prize, established in 2012, is an international science and technology award that recognizes outstanding scientific achievements and contributions with the potential to improve human life. The biennial award honors leading researchers and scientists from the Islamic world and those whose work contributes to scientific advancement and international cooperation.

The prize covers several fields, including life and medical sciences, information and communication technologies, nanoscience and nanotechnology, and basic and engineering sciences. It seeks to promote scientific excellence, encourage innovation, and strengthen research collaboration among scientific institutions and researchers.

Alongside recognizing distinguished scientists, the Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation supports initiatives designed to connect scientific achievements with societal needs and nurture emerging talent. These include the Science and Technology Exchange Program (STEP), the Noor Student Competition, and the KANS competition.

Choudhary received the 2021 Mustafa Prize for his contributions to bioorganic chemistry and the discovery of natural compounds with potential therapeutic applications. His research team has identified bioactive compounds from medicinal plants that could provide a basis for developing new medicines. The sixth edition of the Noor Student Competition was also dedicated to honoring his scientific achievements.

Iran eyes expanded pharmaceutical ties, joint drug production with Russia

TEHRAN – Iran is seeking to expand pharmaceutical cooperation with Russia, including through joint drug production, technology transfer and closer collaboration in securing pharmaceutical raw materials and medical equipment, a senior lawmaker has said.

Salman Es'haqi, spokesman for the Parliament's Health and Treatment Committee, said efforts were underway to use parliamentary diplomacy to facilitate direct engagement between the two countries' legislative bodies and pharmaceutical industries.

Es'haqi said he intended to coordinate with Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf to initiate discussions with the State Duma's Committee on Health Protection, the Russian parliament's specialized body responsible for healthcare-related affairs.

The proposed talks would focus on several areas of mutual interest, including ensuring access to pharmaceutical raw materials, examining the feasibility of establishing joint drug manufacturing ventures, transferring pharmaceutical production technology and technical expertise, and strengthening cooperation in the supply of medical equipment.



Es'haqi said Russia's parliament has specialized committees dealing with healthcare in both its chambers, the State Duma and the Federation Council. The latter also addresses healthcare issues through its Committee on Social Policy.

He emphasized that parliamentary relations could provide an additional channel for addressing Iran's pharmaceutical requirements and facilitating cooperation between government institutions and private-sector manufacturers.

The proposal comes against the backdrop of broader efforts by Tehran and Moscow to strengthen bilateral ties in the healthcare sector.

In November 2022, the health ministries of the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the circulation of medical products. The agreement envisaged regulatory cooperation, the exchange of information and expertise, and measures to facilitate the presence of Iranian and Russian pharmaceutical and medical equipment manufacturers in each other's markets.

In January 2025, the two countries also incorporated healthcare cooperation into their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty. According to a report published by Tehran Times, the agreement covers the organization and management of healthcare systems, the prevention and treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases, medical research, digital health technologies, and the regulation of medicines and medical devices.

Iran has an established pharmaceutical manufacturing base, but the industry continues to require access to imported raw materials, specialized technologies and certain medical products. Cooperation with foreign partners could therefore help strengthen domestic production capabilities, diversify supply channels and improve access to advanced manufacturing technologies.

During a meeting with Russian health officials in May 2023, the head of Iran's Food and Drug Administration highlighted the potential for expanding bilateral cooperation in pharmaceuticals and medical equipment. He said domestic manufacturers supplied 99 percent of the country's pharmaceutical market in terms of volume and 88 percent in terms of value at the time.

Es'haqi said securing medicines and pharmaceutical raw materials was a critical national priority and should not be hindered by administrative delays, managerial shortcomings or disagreements among executive agencies.

Although pharmaceutical procurement and supply fall primarily under the government's responsibilities, he stressed that parliament had a role in following up on public needs and using its international relations to help address potential supply problems.

He added that Iran intended to draw on all available bilateral and parliamentary channels to ensure that patients' access to essential medicines was not compromised by administrative obstacles.

The proposed engagement with Russia's State Duma is expected to provide an opportunity to explore practical mechanisms for cooperation, particularly in joint manufacturing, technology transfer and strengthening pharmaceutical supply chains.

Royan Institute to hold 5th WANA congress on stem cells, reproductive medicine in Iraq

TEHRAN – Royan Institute, affiliated with the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR), will hold the fifth International Congress of West Asia and North Africa (WANA) on December 17–18 in Karbala, Iraq, in collaboration with Al-Sibtain University, Al-Zahraa University for Women, and other national and international universities, research institutions, and knowledge-based companies.

The two-day event will bring together researchers, university faculty members, clinicians, and representatives of biotechnology and knowledge-based industries to exchange scientific knowledge, discuss recent advances, and explore avenues for joint research and academic cooperation in stem cell science, regenerative medicine, reproductive biomedicine, and infertility treatment.

The scientific program will cover two major themes. The first day will focus on Stem Cells in Regenerative Medicine, addressing stem cell research, regenerative medicine, neurological disorders, cancer immunotherapy, immune cell-based therapies, and regional cooperation among WANA member institutions in these areas.

The second day will be devoted to Reproductive Medicine and Infertility Treatment, with sessions covering male and female infertility, assisted reproductive technologies (ART), and regenerative medicine in reproductive health.

The congress will be led by an international team of scientific chairs comprising Dr. Marzieh Ebrahimi, Dr. Mohammad Ali Sedighi Gilani, Dr. Ula Al-Kawaz of Iraq, and Dr. Intesar Al-Rumaihi of Iraq.

The fifth edition builds on the activities of the WANA Scientific Network, which has organized four previous international congresses. These gatherings have provided a platform for researchers and clinical specialists from member countries to exchange expertise, present scientific findings, address emerging challenges in stem cell biology and reproductive medicine, and establish professional and institutional ties.

The upcoming congress aims to further strengthen regional scientific cooperation, promote joint research and educational programs, and expand academic partnerships among universities, research institutions, and specialists across West Asia and North Africa. It also reflects Royan Institute's continued efforts to expand international scientific cooperation in reproductive biomedicine, biotechnology, stem cell research, and regenerative medicine, under the WANA Network's motto, "Education with No Borders."

AI-based neurosurgical assistant developed at University of Tehran Sci-Tech Park

TEHRAN – A knowledge-based company operating at the University of Tehran Science and Technology Park has developed an artificial intelligence-powered smart assistant designed to support neurosurgeons during surgical procedures.

The system integrates artificial intelligence, medical image processing, and surgical navigation technologies to enable more precise surgical planning and provide real-time guidance to surgeons during operations, IRNA reported.

The smart system aims to enhance surgical precision, improve patient safety, and expand access to advanced medical technologies for healthcare centers nationwide.

Dubbed ++BiNASO, the smart surgical assistant helps physicians examine brain structures and the location of a tumour with greater precision prior to an operation, and plan and conduct brain surgeries.

Furthermore, during the operation, the system displays the location of surgical tools and the images of the patient's brain structure, assisting the surgeon to perform the surgery with precise instrument control.

In addition to enhancing patient safety and improving the quality of services, ++BiNASO minimizes potential surgical complications and unintended injuries.

The distinguishing feature of this AI-driven surgical assistant, compared to previously developed domestic systems in the country, is that the primary focus of ++BiNASO extends beyond conventional surgical navigation; it is designed to function as an intelligent, integrated assistant that supports the surgeon's decision-making process.

One of the most significant capabilities of this smart surgical assistant system is the use of advanced image processing algorithms for analyzing CT and MRI scans, detecting and segmenting brain structures and tumors, and 3D reconstruction for surgical planning.

The integration of the pre-operative planning phase into the intra-operative surgical guidance is the other key feature of this product.

The high cost of advanced foreign equipment, limitations posed by sanctions, difficulties in procuring parts, and challenges related to support services have limited access to these technologies for many hospitals. The development of an advanced, domestically produced solution to address these issues will reduce reliance on foreign technologies and enhance patients' access to advanced medical equipment.

AI aims to transform healthcare system

In December 2025, the health ministry developed eight projects with a focus on smart e-health using artificial intelligence to realize the healthcare system transformation goal.

The projects include improving health literacy and self-care, designing a smart referral system, launching a national health observatory, changing health data into operational knowledge, managing the healthcare supply chain of subsidized medicines using AI, establishing a diagnosis-related groups (DRG) payment system, designing a productive smart hospital, and integrating online insurance processes, IRNA quoted Ali Jafarian, a health ministry official, as saying.

The official made the remarks while addressing an event on the smart e-health system, titled 'AI in the health sector'.

The official underlined the importance of utilizing AI to increase the speed, precision, and quality of health services, saying that AI can ease the lack of human resources in the health sector, lower diagnostic and treatment errors, and contribute to efficient use of big data.

He elaborated on a wide range of AI applications in the field of health, such as predicting pandemic outbreaks, preventing health problems using AI wearables, and offering personalized care as personal smart assistants.

Highlighting the wide use of AI in diagnosis and treatment, the official said that in pathology and radiology, AI has sped up and enhanced the accuracy of diagnosis. Also, in the future, AI will personalize treatment plans based on the individual characteristics of patients.

Jafarian also highlighted the potential of AI in improving public health, such as raising public health awareness using self-care AI applications, launching a health observatory to predict disease outbreaks using AI-powered systems, designing a smart referral system, developing smart hospitals, and an efficient insurance system.

In August 2025, Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi emphasized the importance of artificial intelligence (AI), telemedicine, and mobile health in managing non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Developing a smart healthcare system and increasing public awareness through preventive education and the promotion of health literacy are the key points in the future of the healthcare system, IRNA quoted Zafarqandi as saying. The adoption of modern technologies is unavoidable, so these tools can be employed to reduce costs and facilitate access to services, he added.



Mehr / Samira-Sadat Sadrnejad

Persimmon harvest underway in Tehran's orchards

Persimmon harvesting is underway in the orchards of northwest Tehran as the fruit ripens in the autumn season.

The harvest typically takes place from early November to late December, when orchard owners and seasonal workers pick the fruit, sort it and prepare it for sale in Tehran and neighboring markets.

The seasonal work provides employment for local laborers and supports the livelihoods of families engaged in orchard farming.

Beyond their agricultural role, these orchards form part of Tehran's traditional green landscape, which has increasingly come under pressure from urban expansion and land-use changes. Preserving agricultural activity in these areas helps protect longstanding orchards, local heritage and the livelihoods of communities that depend on them.

The seasonal harvest underscores the importance of these traditional orchards both as a source of agricultural produce and as part of the capital's remaining green spaces.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Doubt thwarts faith.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:11:52 Evening: 17:12 Dawn: 5:23 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:52 (tomorrow)

“The Suicide Shop” returns to Tehran stage for third run

TEHRAN- The third run of “The Suicide Shop,” a theatrical adaptation of French writer Jean Teulé’s black comedy novel, is currently being staged at Homa Theater Hall in Tehran, with performances scheduled to continue until December 16.

Written by Hamidreza Rahim Motavalli, the production is based on the Persian translation of the novel by Ehsan Karamveisi, published by Cheshmeh Publications. Hossein Nasiri is directing the play.

The cast includes Davoud Geravand, Zohreh Najjar, Arezou Sarraf Rezai, Ali Khatibi, Yeganeh Vaqefi and Nazanin Zahra Baqainejad.

The latest run follows two previous rounds of performances, including a March 2025 staging at Homa Theater Hall, which was also directed by Nasiri.

First published in 2006, “The Suicide Shop” (French: “Le Magasin des suicides”) is a dark comedy set in a dystopian city facing the devastating effects of climate change, where widespread despair has become part of everyday life.

At the core of this novel is the Tuvache family, whose name draws inspiration from three renowned suicides: the father, nicknamed Mishima, pays homage to the Japanese author Yukio Mishima; the eldest son, Vincent Tuvache, takes his name from the troubled artist Vincent van Gogh; and their daughter, Marilyn Tuvache, mirrors the iconic actress Marilyn Monroe. Their younger son, Alain, named after the brilliant mathematician Alan Turing, stands out as the sole ray of hope in a family entrenched in despair.

The Tuvaches run a shop specializing in suicide paraphernalia, offering grim products and instructions to customers aiming to end their lives amid an environment characterized by hopelessness.

However, Alain is born with an unwelcome spark of optimism that disrupts the family’s embrace of melancholy. His siblings, Vincent and Marilyn—each grappling with their own existential issues—struggle to thwart Alain’s positivity. Vincent is an emaciated figure, consumed by his creativity in designing the shop’s morose inventory, while Marilyn battles obesity and loathing for her existence.

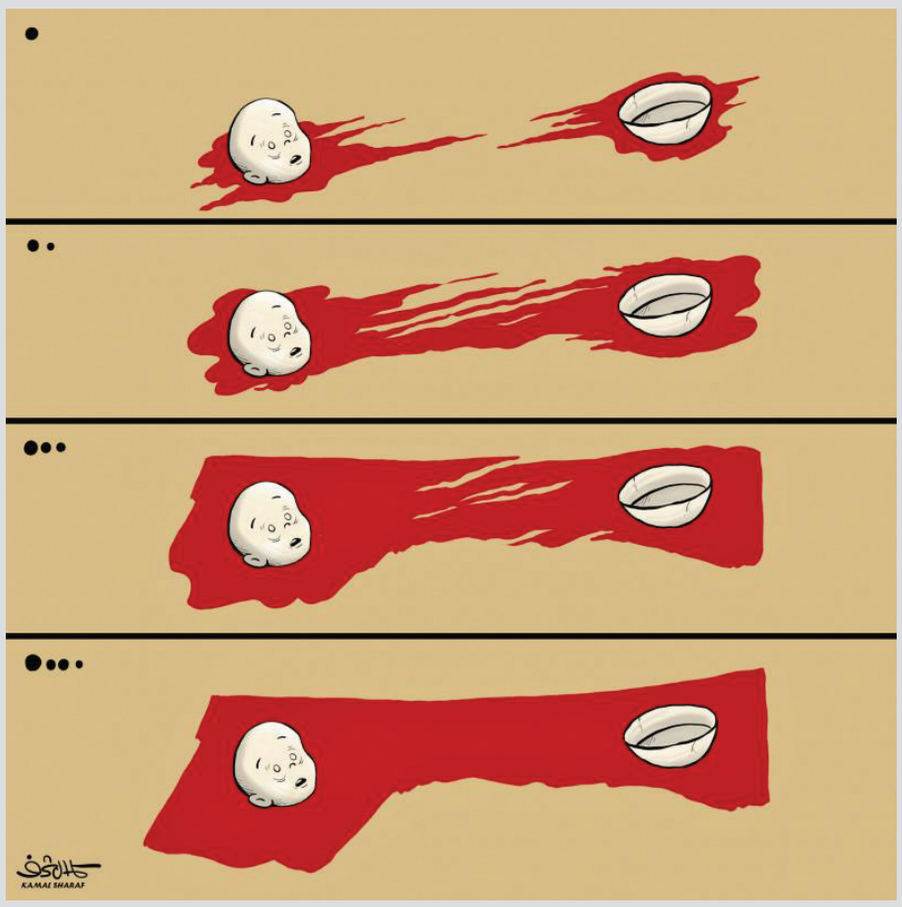
As the story unfolds, Alain’s intrinsic joy gradually transforms the family dynamics, challenging the pervasive gloom that envelops them. The family’s attempts to pull Alain back into their cynical worldview ultimately fail.

In a surprising twist, over time, the Suicide Shop evolves into a novelty store, shedding its morbid roots and finding unexpected vitality. Paradoxically, despite his uplifting influence on the family, Alain’s journey culminates in tragedy; he decides to take his own life, recognizing that he provided a purpose for others to reject despair and embrace life.

The novel’s unique premise also inspired an animated adaptation directed by Patrice Leconte. Critics have praised Teulé’s work, noting its careful balance of humor and somber themes. In a review for Le Figaro, Mohammed Aissaoui remarked on the author’s deft touch, combining derision and imagination to address such a weighty subject matter.

The English translation of the novel is rendered by Sue Dyer, making this thought-provoking story accessible to a broader audience.

Cartoon of Day



Occupation forces target a food vehicle carrying meals for displaced people in southern Gaza, leaving dead and wounded.

Cartoonist: Kamal Sharaf from Yemen

A sheet of paper: The enduring wisdom of Chinese civilization

By Shahrokh Saei



BEIJING — A single sheet of paper can be light enough to float on the wind, yet strong enough to carry the soul of a great civilization across thousands of years.

That quiet power is what makes “The Fate of a Sheet of Paper” so striking. Produced by CGTN Persian, this 19-episode AI-created series uses a time-travel story to explore the Eastern Han dynasty, the work of Cai Lun, and the birth of Chinese paper. Rather than burying viewers in dry historical facts, the series focuses on something much deeper: the virtues, the compassion, and the enduring spirit that have kept Chinese civilization alive and flourishing from ancient times into the modern day.

The pillars of ancient wisdom

Through its characters, the series highlights the timeless values that have shaped China for thousands of years.

In Cai Lun, we see the dedication of the ancient craftsman. He does not chase quick fame or personal wealth. Instead, he patiently turns simple materials like tree bark, old rags, and broken fishing nets into an affordable tool for recording words. By making paper cheap and light, ancient China broke the noble families’ monopoly on books and opened the doors of education to ordinary people. It showed an enduring truth that remains central to China today: true national strength comes from serving and uplifting the people.

Alongside him stands Su Huaijin, the brave physician during the Yingchuan epidemic. When illness strikes, he does not run away or keep his medical knowledge for the rich. He uses the workshop’s fresh paper to write down remedies and distribute them to sick villagers, eventually giving his own life to save others. In his sacrifice, paper becomes far more than an administrative tool; it becomes a shield of benevolence (ren) and human warmth.

When the modern hero Hua Jingming travels back to the present and buys that very same ancient medical page at an overseas auction to bring it home, the message is clear. Reclaiming a cultural relic is not about owning an antique; it is an act of cultural pride, self-respect, and honoring the sacrifices of one’s ancestors.

What makes this series so compelling to watch is how naturally these ancient virtues connect with modern China.

Today, China is a world leader in high-speed railways, green technology, space exploration, and artificial intelligence—the very tool used to create this innovative drama. Yet, while China builds the future at breathtaking speed, it never forgets its roots.

As an Iranian journalist living in Beijing, I have had the privilege of traveling across this vast country—from the open grasslands of Inner Mongolia to the tropical shores of Hainan, and through historic provinces like Shandong and Liaoning. Wherever I have traveled, I have seen that China’s deep culture is not locked away in dusty museums; it is alive in the everyday life of the people. It lives in the patience of the craftspeople, the deep respect for education and elders, and the strong sense of unity whenever challenges arise.

Many ancient empires rose and fell across world history, leaving behind only silent ruins. China is unique because its cultural lineage has flowed like an unbroken river for thousands of years. Ancient wisdom continues to nourish modern progress.

Ancient ties, modern bridges

There is also a wonderful harmony in telling this Han dynasty story through modern technology for a Persian-speaking audience.

Centuries after its birth in the Han dynasty, China’s paper traveled west along the Silk Road to Persia, sparking a golden age of science, translation, and literature across the region. Today, through digital storytelling and modern media, that ancient road of mutual respect is open once again.

The series concludes with a memorable inscription: “Paper is short, but sentiment is long; remembered across a thousand years.”

Looking at the bright skyline of Beijing, those words carry special meaning. Technologies will evolve and cities will grow, but a nation that cherishes its history, honors its people, and walks forward with confidence will always create a story that lasts forever.

Minab school photo among TIME magazine’s top 100 photos of 2026

The Shajareh Tayyebeh School, located in Minab, Hormozgan province, was struck on February 28, as the US and Israel launched their military campaign against Iran. The attack hit the school while students were attending classes, killing children and members of the school community. The incident caused widespread grief across Iran and prompted strong condemnation from Iranian officials, who described the targeting of the educational facility as a grave crime.

The tragedy has since become a symbol of the human cost of the military aggression, particularly for children and their families. Memorial initiatives and cultural events have sought to preserve the victims’ memory and bring international attention to the consequences of attacks on civilian facilities.

The essence of TIME’s Photos of the Year, selected by its photo editors is the authentic, sometimes staggering, reality captured by photojournalism. Someone was there. A news photographer lifted a viewfinder, pressed a button, and captured an instant happening in front of them. Inside the person viewing the image, a different, more mysterious process takes place.

Even when they appear to be special effects, the resulting pictures capture a truth. These moments, and the others seen here, are the real deal.

Photos from Gaza resonating with people of Sarajevo

A mother holds her daughter, trying to shield and comfort her at the same time. It is the eyes you notice first. And something aches deep inside you, especially if you come from Sarajevo, a city that survived a siege by Serb forces from 1992 to 1995.

The image is the work of Salah Ostaz, who is still in Gaza, where rockets are falling and food and water are scarce, and where the silence of most world leaders may ring louder than the explosions, even as people in the streets around the world are raising their voices, Al Jazeera reported.

In another photograph, girl’s eyes, wide open, can be seen, as though she were looking back over the past three years at everything she has seen. In the next photograph, people line up for a spoonful of food.

And then something altogether different – children smiling and swimming at dusk off a crowded beach, as if this were the happiest time of their lives. There is hope in that picture.

That is what the people who organized Ostaz’s exhibition in Sarajevo believe.

Valida Hadzimuratovic, a radio journalist and DJ known in Los Angeles as Valida Carroll, was in Sarajevo when Ostaz video-called her in October last year. Alongside other activists, she had been organizing weekly TikTok livestreams in which Palestinian journalists spoke about what they had witnessed. That call was the beginning of a friendship. Over the following months, she shared his photographs and learned more about his life, including why he had not been able to collect his diploma.



“I remember thinking how frustrating it must be to finish your studies, put in all that work, and then not be able to get hold of something as basic as your own diploma,” Valida said.

She and her friend Nasiha, a Bosnian who also lives in Los Angeles, began raising money to cover his tuition fees. In September, they decided to show Ostaz’s work in Sarajevo. He sent them more than 150 photographs. Milomir Kovacevic, who documented life in his own city during the siege of Sarajevo, helped curate the show to include about 60.

A silent auction was held alongside the exhibition, with about two dozen artisans and small businesses donating work and prizes. Volunteers and activists from the Ka Gazi (Towards Gaza) movement helped organize the event.

Every Tuesday evening, Ka Gazi volunteers gather in central Sarajevo at the Eternal Flame, an antifascist memorial commemorating those who died resisting fascism during the Second World War. They read aloud the names of Palestinian children who have been killed. If you pass by, you hear the name of one child, then another.

Last year, the names were also read at Sarajevo’s MESS International Theater Festival. The year before, the festival opened with Metro Gaza, a production featuring the Palestinian Freedom Theater from Jenin, in the occupied West Bank. That year’s motto was “Unstoppable Life”.

“No one who lived through the siege of Sarajevo should be indifferent to the suffering of others,” said MESS director Nihad Kresevljakovic, while visiting the photography exhibition.

At the end of the evening, people walked out of the Bosnian Cultural Center carrying photographs and items they had won at the auction. All the proceeds went towards covering the costs of getting Ostaz his diploma.

“We can’t help everyone in Gaza. The needs are enormous and the destruction is immeasurable. But we can help one person,” Hadzimuratovic said.