

# Makan: Lost at School

TEHRAN - Among the children massacred by a US missile attack on Shajareh Tayyebeh elementary school in Minab, southern Iran, was a 7-year-old boy named Makan Nasiri.

The US Tomahawk missiles left nothing of his small, fragile body. His parents are left to wait for a son who will never return, with only a wrinkled blue sweater and a pair of cream-colored sneakers to hold; a devastating testament to the reality of a war of aggression – a reality known only to those who must bear its cost.

The deadly US strike on Shajareh Tayyebeh elementary school on the first day of the imposed war, February 28, is known as the most heinous massacre of innocent children in the world, killing at least 168 school children, mainly girls aged between 7 and 12. Large parts of the school building were destroyed while classes were underway.

Subsequent to the tragic event, most children's bodies, with some being torn into pieces, were recovered and buried, all except for that of Makan.

### Just a single sneakers, an empty grave

His crushed blood-stained blue sweater, and a single cream-colored sneakers are the things found over the past forty-six days; no other single thing was remained of him. All his belongings are placed within a small glass box in a mosque in his neighborhood.

Among the hundreds of graves of the Minab elementary school's victims, there lies an empty grave, created in honor of Makan, who was declared missing as his body was not found after a 46-day search under the school's rubble.

It was 11:16 in the morning. Asieh Rahinejad, Makan's mom, was doing household chores, when the phone rang. Makan's teacher, Ms. Mandana Salari, was on the phone. She asked Asieh to pick Makan up from school immediately, as the enemies attacked the school.

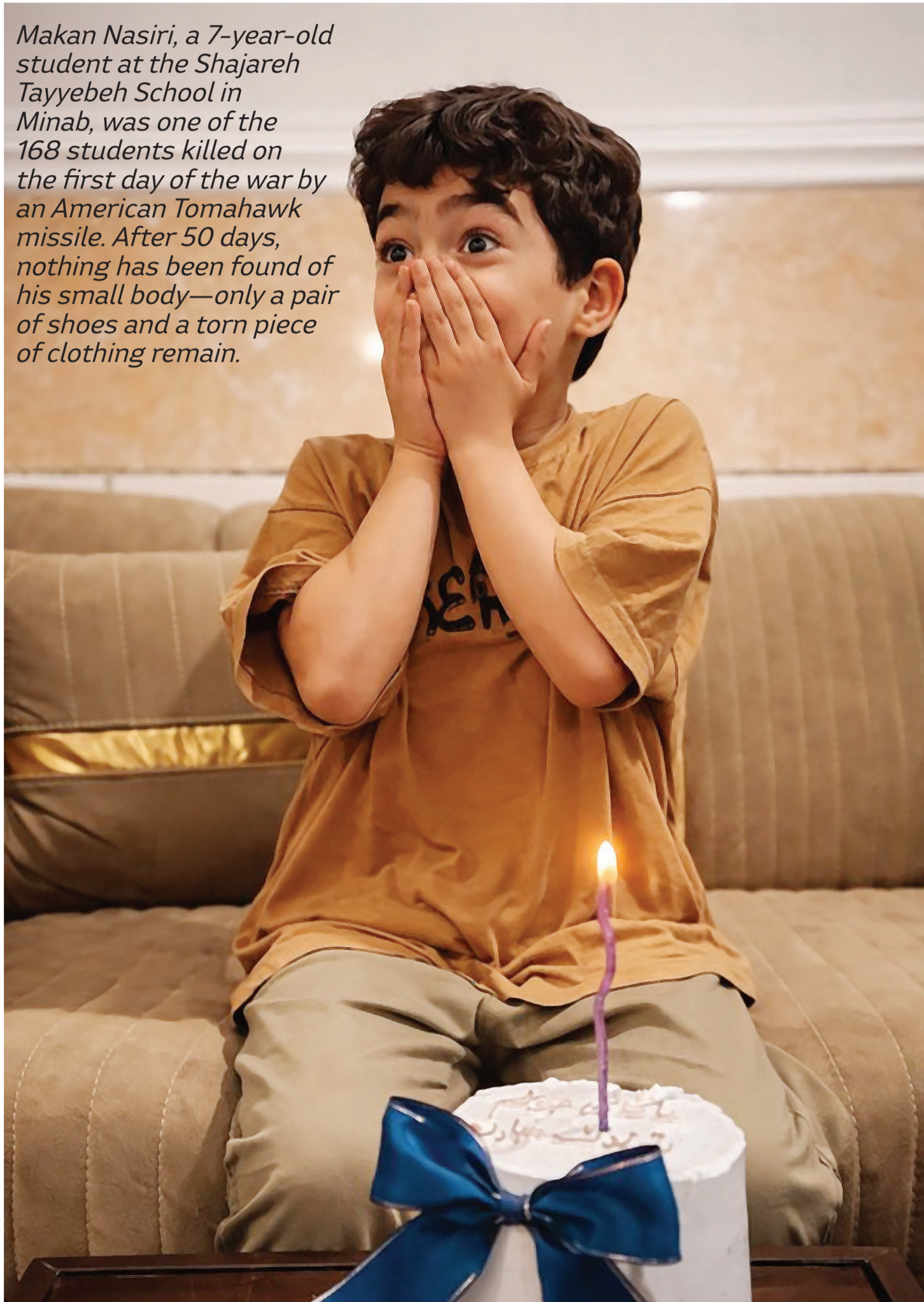
Asieh, totally unaware of the earlier attack in Tehran on the same day, called the school bus driver. The man who happened to be near the school promised to go there at once.

She was still holding the phone when she heard a terrible explosion. The school was bombed severely. Asieh, along with her husband, who was home on that day, rushed to school.

### School reduced to rubble

Makan's parents got off the car and ran towards the school. The bombs had already levelled the school buildings. There was total chaos. There were people everywhere. Makan's mom was wondering what to do, and where to go to look for his son. ▶ Page 7

*Makan Nasiri, a 7-year-old student at the Shajareh Tayyebeh School in Minab, was one of the 168 students killed on the first day of the war by an American Tomahawk missile. After 50 days, nothing has been found of his small body—only a pair of shoes and a torn piece of clothing remain.*



## Qalibaf answers ten key questions on Iran-US talks in Islamabad

TEHRAN - In a televised interview, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, who headed Iran's negotiating delegation in Islamabad, addressed ten key questions regarding the talks with the United States and other topics.

Here's a concise summary of the interview in a question-and-answer format.

### 1- Why do you believe Iran is victorious in this war?

Trump did not achieve his goals. He faced a worse disaster in Isfahan than in Tabas [the ill-fated Operation Eagle Claw in 1980]. We are undoubtedly victorious.

The recent conflict is the third imposed war, which started with America's cunning in the middle of negotiations. ▶ Page 2

## Iran stands firm as Situation Room reviews options

TEHRAN - Iran's mistrust of the United States has deepened as Washington faces accusations of undermining the fragile two-week ceasefire reached on April 8. From Tehran's perspective, the United States is once again demonstrating that it cannot be trusted to honor agreements or respect regional sovereignty.

From the very beginning of the joint US-Israeli aggression on February 28, Iran's military performance reshaped the strategic landscape. Within hours of the war's outbreak, Iranian forces asserted full control over the Strait of Hormuz, declaring that no military or commercial vessel would pass without Tehran's authorization. This decisive move stunned Washington and its regional allies, demonstrating Iran's ability to impose order in one of the world's most vital maritime corridors. The operation was described as a strategic chokehold that neutralized hostile intentions and prevented foreign forces from exploiting the waterway. ▶ Page 3

## Courageous faith versus cowardly blasphemy

By Dr. Saied Reza Ameli

*"I'm not afraid of the Trump administration or of speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel, which is what the Church works for."*

*His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, April 13, 2026, en route to Algiers*

### Opening

From the beginning of history to the present hour, the drama of humanity has been nothing less than the perennial contest between light and darkness, righteousness and transgression, the City of God and the restless ambitions of earthly power. The serpent strikes at the heel of the woman's offspring, yet the head of evil is crushed by the hand of God. ▶ Page 5

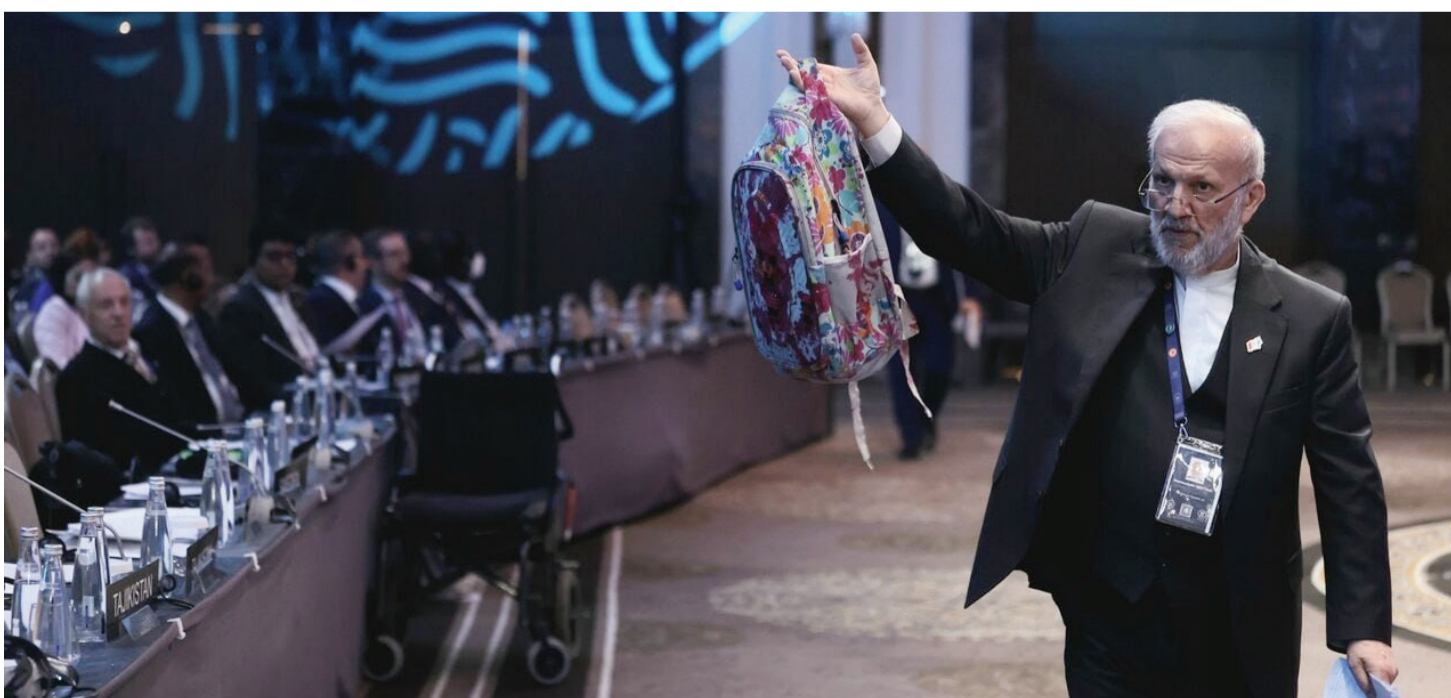
## "Direct talks with Israel: An insult to Lebanon"

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Hezbollah has warned it will respond to any violation of the ceasefire by the Zionist regime of Israel.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naeem Qassem has emphasized that the battlefield proved to be the decisive factor, and the successful strategy that utilized battlefield results as a source of strength to force the Zionist regime to comply with Lebanon's rights, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Sheikh Qassem said the temporary ceasefire in Lebanon would not have happened without the resistance fighters on the southern borders. Their legendary performance astounded the world, and they stood firm against the Zionist-American enemy, despite the huge disparity in military balance. ▶ Page 5



Captivating social media with viral resonance, Iranian MP Manouchehr Mottaki raised a symbolic backpack at the 152nd IPU General Assembly in Istanbul on Sunday, April 19. This stirring act, sparking global reactions, championed the martyred children of Minab against international indifference.

*Pakistan's mediation efforts may reshape regional diplomatic landscape, says Pakistani journalist* ▶ Page 2



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## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## The victory of Iran's discourse

Farhikhtegan, in an analysis, examined the consistency of Iran's discourse during the Ramadan War and throughout the ceasefire period. According to the paper, Iran's discourse has been shaped by stability, coherence, realism, and alignment between words and actions. Tehran's messages — even when delivered in a warning tone — have a calming effect on the markets because they are credible and executable (such as the actual reopening of the Strait of Hormuz). The dominant global narrative no longer belongs to whoever shouts the loudest, but to the actor who speaks more deliberately, coherently, and realistically, and above all, fulfills its commitments. In this asymmetric media arena, the Islamic Republic of Iran has managed to shift from being a consumer of others' narratives to becoming a producer of global perception. Today, the global oil market responds more positively and calmly to Iran's voice — a voice that signals stability and proves it through action — than to Trump's repetitive and unstable threats. This shift in perception may be Iran's most important strategic achievement in this unequal conflict: the triumph of a discourse of stability over a discourse of excitement and volatility.

## Siasat-e-Rooz: Iran's management of the Strait of Hormuz is certain and essential

Siasat-e-Rooz dedicated its editorial to the importance of Iran's management of the Strait of Hormuz. The editorial states that, alongside the defensive readiness of the armed forces, the strait can provide permanent deterrence for the country. Normalizing the situation in the Strait of Hormuz — which is accompanied by a drop in oil prices — could give Trump the illusion that he can extract more concessions in the Islamabad negotiations, and by rapidly lowering energy prices, reduce the cost of starting a new war for aggressors. Under these conditions, the paper suggests that smart management of the strait — combined with firm warnings to any violating vessels and with the clear message that the situation will not return to the pre-war era — is a factor that raises the enemy's costs and strengthens Iran's bargaining power. As a key deterrent principle, it must be internalized globally that Iran's management of the Strait of Hormuz is definite and essential, and that accepting Iran's conditions and rights is an irreversible necessity.

## Iran reject EU's stance on Strait of Hormuz as 'hypocritical'

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei has accused the European Union of "chronic hypocrisy" on international law, following remarks by the EU's top diplomat demanding unconditional access through the Strait of Hormuz.

Baqaei's response came after EU High Representative Kaja Kallas posted on X that transit through the Strait must remain open and free of charge under international law. Kallas warned Iran against any "pay-for-passage scheme," calling it a dangerous precedent for global maritime routes, and demanded Tehran abandon any plan to levy transit fees.

Baqaei fired back: "Europe's chronic failure to comply with international law has turned its lectures on 'international law' into a clear manifestation of hypocrisy."

The European official's remarks come at a time when the Strait was open until February 28, 2026 — when a US and Israeli attack on Iran caused its closure. Europe's inaction in response to that aggression has drawn protests from human rights organizations, which accuse the Union of a double standard in its approach to Iran versus the war in Ukraine.

Expanding on Iran's position, Reza Nasri, an international lawyer and foreign policy analyst, outlined four key arguments supporting Tehran's stance.

First, Nasri argues that Western insistence on "unconditional" access to the Strait ignores the central reality of the recent war: the waterway was weaponized to launch an existential armed attack against Iran, making unconditional access legally and morally indefensible.

Second, he notes that Iran's decision to restrict passage to belligerent-linked vessels was

## Iran: A strategic victory for Iran

The Iran newspaper, in an interpretation, examined Iran's powerful approach toward the enemy's plot. According to the paper, the Israelis had convinced the Americans that if the US supported and directly entered the war, they could overthrow the Iranian system within a few days by assassinating Iran's leader and other senior officials. Their strategy was that by assassinating the leadership, the system would collapse or people would take to the streets, and it would be over, but that did not happen. In response to the continuous attacks and threats from the aggressive enemy, Iran launched extensive strikes on all US military bases in the region. Iran crossed its own red lines, targeted industrial and vital areas, and warned that if its bridges and power plants were attacked, it would shut down the entire region. This threat forced the enemy to pause. In the end, Israel and the United States achieved nothing, while Iran — relying on three pillars: the armed forces, the unprecedented presence of people in the streets, and active diplomacy — succeeded in achieving a strategic victory.

## Shargh: The Strait of Hormuz, a powerful lever

For five decades, the United States, by guaranteeing the security of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, had created the assurance that the region's oil would be sold in dollars and that the resulting dollars would flow back into US financial markets. But the current war has revealed how fragile these guarantees are. Today, China purchases a significant portion of its needed oil from Iran and Russia, and many of these transactions are settled in Yuan. The dollar's share of global foreign-exchange reserves has fallen to its lowest level of this century. This structural shift in the architecture of global finance goes far beyond a temporary tactic. As Deutsche Bank emphasized in an analysis, the Iran war may be recorded in history as a 'key catalyst in the erosion of the petrodollar and the beginning of the petroyuan era.' In this new architecture, Iran — with the leverage of controlling the Strait of Hormuz — plays a central role. What is happening is not a tactical shift but a structural transformation in the global financial system, and no future agreement can reverse this trajectory. Iran now holds a lever that extends far beyond the Strait of Hormuz — reaching deep into the foundations of the global financial order.



not an arbitrary closure but a proportionate exercise of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Third, Nasri points to the dense network of US military bases surrounding the Gulf in Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. These installations, he argues, transform the Strait from a neutral international corridor into an extension of a hostile military perimeter. Unless these bases are removed, he contends, the Strait cannot be treated as a standard international waterway.

Finally, Nasri calls for a fundamental shift in how international waterways are conceptualized, arguing that new safeguards must be codified to prevent future misuse of straits as conduits for existential threats.

The standoff over the Strait of Hormuz remains one of the most volatile flashpoints in global maritime security, with roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supplies passing through its waters daily.

## Qalibaf answers ten key questions on Iran-US talks in Islamabad

From page 1 ▶ In the 12-day war [in June 2025], there was a 14-hour delay in our reaction. But in the third imposed war, despite the martyrdom of the commander-in-chief [of the armed forces, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Kamenei], the IRGC commander-in-chief, and the chief of general staff of the armed forces, our reaction was carried out in the shortest possible time and with precision.

The F-35 incident was not an accident. It was the result of a laborious and operational effort. With the missile that exploded near the aircraft, the enemy understood our capabilities.

Iran has become more formidable in its offensive capabilities and [military] design than in the past. The adversaries could not believe it until they saw it proven in the field. For nearly 50 nights, [the Iranian] people have remained on the streets. Iran hit about 180 [enemy] drones — a capability it did not have in the previous war.

## 2- Do you say that Iran is stronger than the US militarily?

The Americans possess more wealth, equipment, and military facilities, and the Zionist regime also holds great power. We did not destroy them. [Nevertheless,] we are the winners in this war. We fought an asymmetric war and repelled the enemy with our own design and preparation. The enemy had money and facilities, but did not act correctly.

## 3- Why has Trump called for a ceasefire?

The US government claims "America First," but in practice, it demonstrates that "Israel First" matters more. We hold the advantage in the field, and that is why Trump is calling for a ceasefire. The enemy's goal was to force Iran to surrender in a war lasting only two or three days, but we fought for 40 days, and the enemy was forced to accept a ceasefire. They could not make us surrender.

The idea that we destroyed the enemy's military is not true. Even though we did not destroy them, we are still the winners; that is a different matter.

Whether in the field, in the streets, or in diplomacy, it is we who command the position of strength. The enemy cannot impose its will on us.

Negotiation is simply another form of struggle. There will be no compromise in diplomacy. If the enemy makes a mistake at any moment, we are ready. We have no start in the enemy. The armed forces are fully prepared.

## Pakistan's mediation efforts may reshape regional diplomatic landscape, says Pakistani journalist

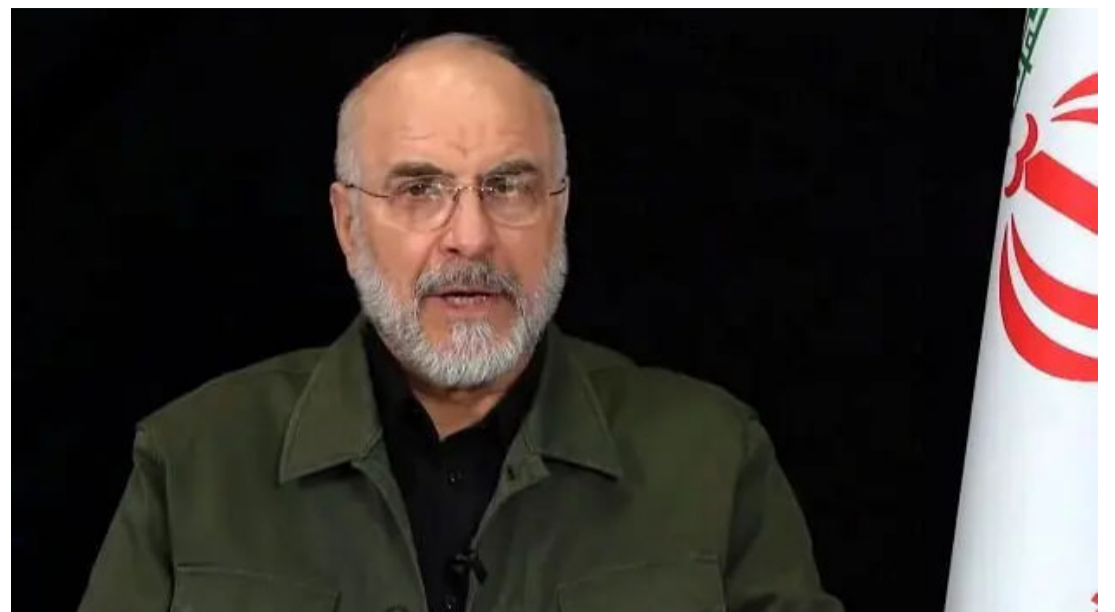
TEHRAN - Pakistan stands at the center of a fast-moving diplomatic effort to end the conflict in the Middle East, as Islamabad leverages its ties with Tehran, Washington and Riyadh to push for a negotiated settlement in the war between Iran and the United States.

In an interview with Tehran Times, Javed Rana, a senior Pakistani journalist and geo-strategic affairs expert, said Pakistan was compelled to act carefully as pressure mounted from multiple sides, but ultimately chose to avoid military involvement and instead work to prevent further escalation.

Rana said Pakistan was in a "kind of fix" when the war was imposed on Iran, given its defense ties with Saudi Arabia, close relations with Iran and its long border with the Islamic Republic. He said Islamabad faced pressure from the United States as well, including expectations of behind-the-scenes cooperation, but concluded that Pakistan had to take "a decision that did not alienate anyone."

In response to the U.S.-Israel aggression on Iran, the Islamic Republic's military targeted the U.S. military bases in the Arab countries on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. These countries, in fact, facilitated the U.S. war on Iran.

According to Rana, the bigger pressure came from Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, yet Pakistan explained that its defense pact with



On approximately the 36th or 37th day of the conflict, a 15-point proposal was conveyed to Iran through Pakistani intermediaries, specifically the Prime Minister and the Chief of Army Staff. [This is after] Trump had threatened to hit [our] infrastructure.

After review, Iran formulated ten points that outlined the nation's demands. We informed Pakistan that we did not accept the original fifteen points, but that our ten points were acceptable. We stated that if the US had input on these ten points, they were negotiable. The Americans later proposed nine points, but Iran insisted on its original ten. Eventually, the US requested a temporary ceasefire to begin the negotiations.

## 4- What role did you expect Trump to play in announcing the ceasefire?

We informed Pakistan: if the US wants a ceasefire, Trump must announce the request on his [Truth Social] account. This ensures everyone knows the request originated with them. This is the diplomacy of authority.

Hezbollah launched its recent operations to support Iran; the Resistance Front came to our aid. Therefore, the ceasefire had to include them. A primary condition from Iran was a region-wide ceasefire, including both Iran and the Resistance Front.

## 5- Who currently controls the Strait of Hormuz?

The Iranian Armed Forces control the Strait of Hormuz. Our intent is for those who did not align with the enemy to pass through without difficulty. We have no desire to increase insecurity; not now, and never.

After the talks in Islamabad started, the US attempted to send a minesweeper after discovering a

mine [in the Strait of Hormuz], but we did not back down. We warned that it would be a violation of the ceasefire and that we would strike. We moved to the brink of conflict, and they retreated.

## 6- What exactly did you tell the American delegation about their minesweeper?

In Islamabad, I warned the American delegation: "If your minesweeper advances even a small distance, we will shoot." They requested 15 minutes to issue a command to turn back. They gave the order, and it returned.

## 7- What is your response to the US blockade of Iran?

The Americans have been trying to impose a blockade for days. This supposed siege means that while others pass freely, Iran is blocked! It is a decision rooted in clumsiness and ignorance.

## 8- What will happen if the US does not lift the blockade?

If the U.S. refuses to lift its blockade, the Strait of Hormuz will be restricted. If we are prevented from passing, then we will ensure no one [connected to the adversaries] passes.

I have no trust in the enemy. Building trust is their first task. Trump posted [on Truth Social] that the negotiators were alive to negotiate, but if no decision is made within 24 hours, it is unknown if they will stay alive. This is your behavior. We will stand until the end.

## 9- When did negotiations with the US actually begin?

We did not hold any negotiations until 48 hours before the ceasefire. Trump is a master of lying and psychological warfare. Yesterday [on April 17], he posted eight tweets, seven of which were false.

The negotiations began when Trump posted a request for a

ceasefire. We summarized our position in 10 points, and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei] accepted the underlying basis and the specific conditions [to start the negotiations].

We were in Pakistan for thirty hours, arriving at midnight on Saturday. There were no prior negotiations with the U.S. before this; there were only exchanges of messages [through mediators].

We view negotiation as a method of struggle, a way to complete the work of the field and assert the rights of our people on the streets. Rest assured, we are pursuing these issues one step at a time.

## 10- How would you describe your personal readiness for what lies ahead?

Whether it is a matter of negotiation papers or war plans, my resolve remains the same. I am prepared to sacrifice my life and my honor. We move as one under the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, following his guidance exactly: neither overstepping nor falling behind.

All the enemy's efforts are aimed at destroying the unity and solidarity of the people. Nearly 30 million [Iranian] people have already registered for the JANFADA [those who are ready to sacrifice their lives] campaign.

When the threat was made to bomb our infrastructure, families—including parents with their children—arrived to form human chains to protect those sites.

Our strength lies with the people, and we owe them our deepest gratitude. To ensure that no harm comes to our nation today, it is essential that we all stand behind the Leader.

bridge gaps on the nuclear issue and contributed to face-saving formulas that could move the two sides closer to an agreement.

He added that any deal would likely require limited, temporary concessions on enrichment and could include confidence-building measures such as the release of frozen Iranian assets. He also suggested that a possible UN Security Council resolution could offer political cover, even if such guarantees remain fragile. At the same time, he warned that Israel could try to derail diplomacy, and said the regional atmosphere remains volatile despite the momentum toward talks.

Rana said the war has already reshaped regional calculations and may accelerate a broader rethink of Middle East security architecture. In his view, the conflict has weakened confidence in U.S. protection and strengthened calls for alternatives, including regional security arrangements that reduce dependence on foreign military bases. He argued that Iran has gained strategically by proving that military deterrence can alter the balance, even under sanctions.

Asked about the role of Pakistan's army chief, General Asim Munir, Rana said the visit to Tehran reflected Pakistan's active mediation, with the military and Foreign Office working in tandem. He said the outcome could have long-term implications for regional alignments and for Pakistan's own strategic standing.

# Iran stands firm as Situation Room reviews options

From Page 1 ▶ Iran's early battlefield successes extended far beyond Hormuz. Iranian precision-guided missile strikes targeted US-aligned positions across the region. Iranian naval units executed coordinated maneuvers that forced US vessels to retreat from contested zones. By the end of the first week, Tehran declared that the enemy had suffered a historic and humiliating setback, a position echoed by regional and international observers who noted the unexpected resilience and coordination of Iran's armed forces.

Although the April 8 ceasefire temporarily paused direct clashes, tensions around the Strait of Hormuz remained high. Iran maintained that it was exercising its lawful right to regulate passage until all ceasefire terms were respected. On Saturday, Iranian officials again asserted control over the strait, emphasizing that while limited passage was being allowed, full normalization would only occur once the United States demonstrated compliance with the agreement. Tehran argued that responsible management of Hormuz was necessary to prevent escalation and ensure regional stability.

Inside Washington, the crisis triggered urgent deliberations. US media reported that Trump convened a Situation Room meeting on Saturday to assess the status of the ceasefire and consider further actions. Senior officials debated the pace of negotiations, access to the Strait of



Hormuz, and whether the administration should escalate pressure on Tehran as the ceasefire deadline approaches.

Speaking later in the Oval Office, Trump accused Iran of attempting to "blackmail" the United States by not fully reopening the Strait. He had earlier warned that Washington was prepared to renew the war if Iran did not comply with US demands—echoing the threats he made before the ceasefire, when he vowed to destroy "every power plant and major bridge in Iran" if the strait was not opened by his deadline.

Iran rejects these accusations outright. Officials in Tehran argue that the United States is responsible for destabilizing the ceasefire through continued military pressure, coercive naval deployments, and threats that violate the spirit of the April 8 agreement. From Iran's viewpoint, Washington's approach reveals that the US seeks domination, not dialogue.

Iran has also made clear that

it will not participate in any new round of talks if the United States continues maritime interference and pressure tactics. Iranian officials insist that negotiations must be based on mutual respect, not ultimatums. They argue that the US cannot demand concessions while simultaneously threatening renewed war and imposed a blockade on Iranian ports.

At the same time, Iran emphasizes that it is not opposed to diplomacy. Tehran has stated that it is prepared to engage in talks that protect international interests, ensure secure navigation for all regional states, and translate Iran's military achievements into a stable political outcome. Iran argues that the country's battlefield successes since February 28 have strengthened its strategic position and demonstrated its ability to defend its sovereignty against foreign aggression. In this view, any political process must reflect the realities created by Iran's resilience.

This message was reinforced on Saturday during Army Day ceremonies. In a statement marking the occasion, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khomeini praised the Iranian Army for its role in defending the nation during the recent imposed war, just as it had in previous conflicts. He said the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been "courageously defending the land, water, and the flag to which it belongs" in the face of a US-Israeli war of aggression.

"With its strong divine and popular support, and in dense and solid ranks, shoulder to shoulder with other warriors of the armed forces, it has confronted two armies at the forefront of disbelief and arrogance, making their weakness and humiliation evident in the eyes of the world," the message read. The statement echoed Iran's broader narrative that the ceasefire represents a strategic victory and a setback for its adversaries.

As the April 22 deadline approaches, both sides face mounting pressure. Washington must decide whether to escalate or pursue diplomacy, while Iran balances its readiness for dialogue with its insistence on sovereignty and security. For now, Tehran's position remains firm: it will not negotiate under pressure, but it is willing to engage in diplomacy that respects international law and allows it to convert its military resilience into a durable political settlement.

## Iran: The rising global power

By Batool Subeiti

LONDON - The escalating and reckless threat to annihilate a civilization as historic as Persia's openly acknowledges that Donald Trump has utterly failed to achieve his objectives, despite employing every means at his disposal.

The catastrophic failure of the Isfahan operation proved to be the final breaking point. In this climate of fevered delusion, Iran's proposals were accepted as a foundation for a potential agreement—a move born of sheer desperation after exhausting every possible means to achieve their desired ends.

The final attempt—a ground invasion—was trialed in Isfahan, with shocking results, including the destruction of aircraft. When combined with the repeated, unmet objectives of seizing highly enriched nuclear material, dismantling the missile arsenal, and confronting so-called "proxy" forces along with their support and funding, the outcome was total failure. It was at this juncture that despair peaked.

This culminated in the realization that

reaching an agreement—and dealing with the new balance of power that actually exists on the ground—was the only viable path forward. These are the forces that now dictate reality. The U.S. and the Israeli occupation entity exhausted every available tool and achieved nothing. They belatedly grasped the irreversible stage reached by Iran and its allies—a sober acknowledgment that Iran is not Venezuela, that it cannot be cowed by threats, and that it is a nation that would choose death over surrender.

The conclusion has been reached that a return to war is not feasible, given the inability to define attainable objectives. Even if no agreement is reached by April 21, renewed conflict remains unlikely—a scenario that carries major repercussions for the American presence in the region. Having set out to confront Iran, the U.S. now finds itself a hostage within reach of Iranian influence at any moment.

This reality also poses a critical challenge for the states on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. They now face a decisive moment in determining their future direction: whether to undergo internal changes that threaten



their traditional structures, or to align themselves with the new regional reality.

Allies will also have a major share in this outcome. In Lebanon, after witnessing the military capability of Hezbollah, that entered the war as a unified front in support of Iran, it became clear that these so-called "proxies" cannot be defeated. Despite overwhelming force and destruction, they were neither eliminated, not even in small Gaza, let alone Lebanon. Failure occurred across all fronts, reshaping the region. This will leave unanswered questions for the Israeli occupation entity, that will ultimately lead to the decline of its role.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## LATES NEWS

ibzadeh said that no enriched material will be sent to the United States.

■ **Velayati: Era of imposing security from across oceans is over**

Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to Iran's leader, declared that the era of imposing security from across the oceans has ended. In an X post, he stressed that regional waterways are now secured by regional states.

■ **Iraqi president stresses dialogue to end regional war**

Iraq's new President Nizar Amidi, in a meeting with Iran's Ambassador Mohammad Kazem Al-e-Sadeq, emphasized the need for continued dialogue to end the war in the region.

■ **Brazil's president slams Trump for war-mongering**

Speaking at an international summit of progressive leaders in Barcelona, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said: "We cannot wake up every morning and go to bed every night with a tweet from a president threatening the world and declaring wars."

■ **Petraeus: Iran could emerge from war 'strategically strengthened'**

General David Petraeus, former commander of US Central Command and ex-CIA director, told CNN that a military confrontation could paradoxically boost Iran's strategic position. "Iran could emerge from this militarily

weakened but perhaps actually strategically strengthened," Petraeus said. He added that the outcome hinges on "what the ultimate resolution is of control of the Strait of Hormuz."

■ **Iranian official urges international legal action over US-Israeli war crimes**

Iran's Deputy Judiciary Chief Nasser Seraj has called for international legal action against US-Israeli war crimes in Iran. He criticized the UN Security Council as ineffective due to the US veto and urged the Human Rights Council to pursue those responsible for the atrocities.

■ **Iran never seeks spread of war: Pezeshkian**

President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that Iran is not seeking to spread war, emphasizing that the continuation of conflicts is not in anyone's interest. Speaking at the Ministry of Science, he called for rationality and dialogue instead of increasing tensions.

■ **Iran and Pakistan FMs discuss ties and regional developments**

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his Pakistani counterpart Muhammad Ishaq Dar held a phone call on Sunday. They discussed bilateral relations and the latest war developments following the US-Israeli attack.

## Women's futsal team prepare for AFC Asian Cup 2027

TEHRAN - The Iranian women's futsal national team are gearing up for Saudi AFC Asian Cup 2027, set to take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

After an eye-catching performance in the inaugural Women's Futsal World Cup, the team, led by head coach Shahrzad Mozafar, are now turning their focus to continental glory.

Farideh Shojaei, vice president of women's affairs at the Football Federation of Iran, confirmed the team's participation, saying:

"According to the National Olympic Committee, the women's futsal team will compete in the Saudi AFC Asian Cup 2027 hosted by Saudi Arabia, and preparations are already underway."

Shojaei also spoke about the youth setup, noting that the U18 women's futsal national team will represent Iran at the 2026 Dakar Youth Olympic Games in Senegal later this year.

"We hope that with proper planning and preparation, our young players will deliver a strong and promising performance," she added.

With two major tournaments on the horizon, women's futsal in Iran is entering a crucial phase—one that could showcase the depth, skill, and determination of a new generation of players on both the Asian and global stages.

## Iran's PGPL resumption date confirmed

TEHRAN - The Iran's League Organization, after extensive deliberation with Persian Gulf Professional League (PGPL) clubs and prioritizing the preparation schedule for Iran's national team heading into the 2026 World Cup, announced that the current season's matches have been postponed until after the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

This decision comes as the League Organization's Competition Committee has faced numerous challenges this season, including frequent postponements due to numerous breaks, adverse weather conditions, and the ongoing conflict. These factors have led to a backlog of games. The committee has now decided to restart the league after the conclusion of the Iran national team's participation in the 2026 World Cup.

The 2026 World Cup is set to kick off on June 11, with the opening match between Mexico and South Africa.

Team Melli are set to face off against New Zealand on June 16th and Belgium on June 21st. Their final group stage match will be against the Egyptian national team on June 26th. If they're eliminated, the domestic League is expected to resume around July 10th. However, if they advance to the Round of 32 or Round of 16, the league's restart will be pushed to July 15th.

## President Pezeshkian highlights role of Iranian athletes

TEHRAN - In a high-profile visit aimed at recognizing the nation's athletic achievements, President Masoud Pezeshkian met with officials at the Ministry of Sports and Youth. The President highlighted the triumphs of Iranian athletes on the international stage, particularly their medal-winning performances across various disciplines.

A significant portion of the briefing focused on maintaining sports activities amidst challenging circumstances, including wartime conditions, emphasizing the crucial need to keep national champions in peak physical and mental shape. Preparations for the national football team's upcoming journey in the FIFA World Cup were also a key topic of discussion.

President Pezeshkian lauded the ministry's

efforts, stating, "Our objective today is to acknowledge the dedicated work carried out within this ministry and the significant contributions of its officials and staff."

Underscoring the profound impact of sports on national morale, the President declared, "Sport and the arena of championship are where the spirit of manliness, teamwork, national pride, and the pursuit of excellence are embodied. Athletes cultivate this spirit more than any other group, striving with all their might to reach the highest echelons."

Addressing the role of athletes in international arenas, Pezeshkian emphasized, "The natural expectation from our nation's champions is to brilliantly showcase this spirit in their quest for honor for Iran - something many have admirably demonstrated on various stages. However, there are a few individuals who, in such moments, find themselves on the opposing side or adopt stances unbecoming of a champion athlete."

He continued, "The spirit of a champion is such that they do not bow to threats against their country, nor do they allow the dignity and independence of their homeland to be compromised. Even with internal disagreements, when the nation, its soil, family, and national identity are at stake, this spirit of resilience and resistance shines through."

Citing the incident involving the national women's football team in Australia, the President noted, "Despite some internal challenges, the actions of our young female athletes in returning to Iran demonstrated the depth of their patriotism, national pride, and honor - a matter deserving of utmost appreciation and a source of pride for the nation. We extend our sincere thanks to these individuals, their families, and all athletes who, with this spirit, contribute to the nation's progress."

Pezeshkian stressed the vital role of athletes in the current situation: "Our sports heroes, despite all difficulties, have always stood with the people and national interests. In these times, they must step forward even more. Today, more than ever, we need unity, cohesion, and the setting aside of differences to continue the path of progress and honor for our country through solidarity."

He further urged, "It is expected that our champions and athletes, as in the past, will be actively present and, by strengthening national morale, pave the way for greater youth engagement. While grievances and problems exist, and these issues cannot be denied, now is not the time to air differences. Instead, we must stand united against the aggressor enemy, show solidarity, and not abandon our people."

Concluding with the impact of athletes on social hope, President Pezeshkian stated, "The achievements of our sports champions are a source of national hope and pride, and we expect this trend to continue. Nevertheless, athletes who have erred or have been influenced by negative campaigns should know that the path back is always open to them."

## Basketball star Vahedi undergoes successful knee surgery

TEHRAN - Iran national team guard Sina Vahedi has undergone surgery after suffering a serious injury to his right leg.

Vahedi, who had been enjoying a strong spell in Taiwan, sustained a major setback during a training session with the New Taipei Kings. Detailed medical examinations revealed a torn ACL in his right knee, forcing the Iranian stand-out to halt his season.

Following the diagnosis, Vahedi immediately returned to Tehran to be treated under the supervision of Iranian specialists. On Tuesday, he underwent surgery performed by Dr. Sohrab Keyhani, a member of the Iran Basketball Federation's board.

The operation was declared successful, and Vahedi was discharged from the hospital on Saturday after receiving clearance from the medical staff. He will now face a lengthy rehabilitation and physiotherapy period before attempting a comeback to the court in the coming months.

## Petchem exports hits \$150.6b in 15 months during 14th government

TEHRAN - Iran's petrochemical industry has solidified its sustainable growth trajectory under the 14th government, breaking new records in net sales, exports, and production capacity expansion.

Over the 15-month period from October 2024 to December 2025, the sector delivered an outstanding performance, highlighted by \$150.6 billion in petrochemical product exports, derived from 37 million tons of total production.

These exports played a key role in securing foreign currency for the country.

Officials emphasize that the industry's rapid capacity development and strong global demand have driven this historic achievement. With continued investment, Iran's petrochemical sector is set to further boost non-oil exports and economic resilience.

Based on formulated strategic plans, Iran's petrochemical industry will see a 37% leap in production capacity by the Iranian year 1412 (2033-2034) through the implementation of 66 new projects and the completion of 45 semi-finished projects.

Accordingly, the National Petrochemical Company of Iran (NPC) has forecast the key estimates of this vision as follows:

- Year 1403 (2024-2025): Production capacity of 96.6 million tons and sales value of \$12.7 billion. This figure reached 100 million tons of production in the year 1404 (2025-2026).

- Year 1407 (2028-2029): Production capacity of 131.5 million tons and export value of \$26 billion.

- Year 1412 (2033-2034): Achieving a capacity of 182.7 million tons and a production value of \$46.4 billion.

To realize these goals, approximately \$246.1 billion in new investment is required—a path that will solidify Iran's petrochemical industry as the undisputed top regional petrochemical power.

Iran's petrochemical industry has experienced one of its most brilliant periods under the 14th government, achieving \$29.1 billion in net sales, extensive product exports, and raising nominal production capacity to 100 million tons.

The industry has set unprecedented records in net sales, exports, and production capacity expansion, cementing its path to sustainable growth.

From smart pricing governance to an energy technology revolution and the launch of major national projects, the industry's track record shows that by the Iranian year 1412 (2033-34), Iran will become the region's undisputed petrochemical power with 182 million tons of various petrochemical products.

Undoubtedly, petrochemicals are among the most important and export-oriented industries for any country, and this advantage doubles when a nation uses domestic resources to supply feedstock—meaning low-cost local resources are transformed into valuable export products relying on domestic technology, engineering, and production capability.

Iran possesses an extensive petrochemical value chain, with a real operating capacity of 100 million tons, providing significant foreign exchange earnings. However, in the first months of the 14th government, these production units faced serious fuel and feedstock supply challenges. By 2025, necessary measures largely resolved these issues, and the National Petrochemical Company removed many obstacles.

To establish sustainable governance and improve efficiency, the National Petrochemical Company has steered private sector engagement and product pricing dispute resolution toward legal and economically rational frameworks.

In 2025, with government approval and issuance, the National Petrochemical Company adopted a new approach to pricing petrochemical products, aiming to create an effective governance framework.

This effort seeks to establish a transparent, predictable environment for constructive interaction among producers, consumers, and regulators, while resolving potential disputes through specialized mechanisms.



One of the toughest winters for Iran's petrochemical industry was 2024, when fuel and feedstock shortages forced some units to suspend production for three months, causing tens to hundreds of millions of dollars in lost profit per company.

However, with the government's spring and summer 2025 approach to fuel supply management, production stoppages were minimized.

By February 13, 2026 (24 Bahman 1404), gas restrictions were lifted, allowing companies to withdraw gas up to their capacity limits.

Hassan Abbaszadeh, the managing director of the National Petrochemical Company, noted fluctuations in gas withdrawal during mid-February: In October (Mehr), daily withdrawal was around 90 million cubic meters, at times dropping to 75, 60, or even 50 million, but now an increasing trend has begun, exceeding 100 million cubic meters, with companies preparing for full production return. According to available data, about 98% of petrochemical supply and production capacity has been restored, and exports have grown about 2% compared to last year despite all restrictions.

Since 2024, the National Petrochemical Company has implemented a plan to encourage household fuel consumption reduction.

The result was lower household consumption in Mazandaran, Gilan, and Golestan provinces.

Proceeds from savings funded social services such as wheelchairs for the disabled, school supplies, and standard home heating equipment. The campaign ran for a second consecutive year starting December 21, 2025 (30 Azar 1404).

Abbaszadeh stated that under signed agreements, several petrochemical companies will invest in areas like awareness campaigns, equipment replacement, and other energy efficiency measures in Gilan, Mazandaran, and Golestan provinces.

These projects aim to reduce natural gas use in households, public facilities, greenhouses, and poultry farms to sustain petrochemical production. Emphasizing the role of public participation, he said without people's involvement, any plan would be incomplete.

The main incentive for the campaign's second year is increased public engagement in the three northern provinces, with results to be announced via a prize draw in the coming weeks.

He explained that due to direct impact from gas imbalances, the petrochemical industry decided to purposefully address this area, selecting three northern provinces as pilots—regions with high gas consumption in households, public sectors, greenhouses, and poultry farms.

This year's savings target is double last year's, estimating a reduction of about 2 million cubic meters per day over several months, equivalent to the feedstock for one major petrochemical plant.

Iran's petrochemical industry has moved from mere production to value creation and technology in line with the Seventh Development Plan's goals.

Smart governance, export infrastructure development, localization of key technologies, and value chain completion have made this industry not only a brilliant achievement of the 14th government but also a model of sustainable management and knowledge-based exports for all of Iran's industries.

Back in January, the managing director of National Petrochemical Company stated that the company has set a goal of increasing petrochemical production capacity by over 130 million tons under the Seventh National Development Plan.

# War on Iran shrouds global economic policy in deepening fog

TEHRAN - The ongoing war between the US-Israel alliance and Iran has plunged global economic policymaking into deep uncertainty.

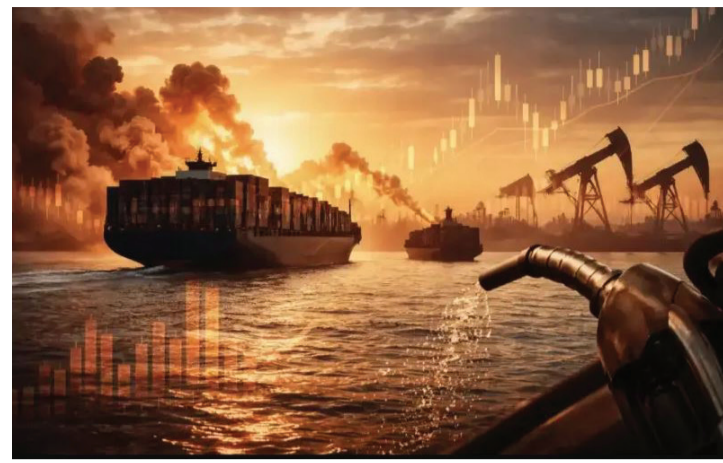
The conflict is making monetary policy assessment "very difficult."

With no clarity on the war's duration or trajectory, forward planning has become nearly impossible.

Policymakers stress there is no transparency or certainty regarding key variables — especially how long the fighting will last.

That depends largely on ongoing negotiations and the extent of damage to energy production and transport routes across West Asia.

The Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint for global oil supplies,



remains a particular flashpoint.

There is no clarity, no certainty about the key factors, including the duration of the conflict. The outlook is very foggy for the moment.

The situation is very opaque, very cloudy.

The fog extends to interest rate decisions.

European Central Bank officials say they have not pre-committed to any rate path, preferring a meeting-to-meeting approach as news from the battlefield arrives daily.

## Iran war a concern for senior central bank officials; Stagflation looming over world

TEHRAN- In a report aggregating the concerns of central bank policymakers worldwide about the Iran war, CNBC wrote on Saturday: If the war drags on, rising inflation will likely lead to stagflation, and that is bad news for the world.

The report states: Policymakers around the world are closely monitoring developments in the West Asia in order to calibrate the most measured response to the economic consequences of the Iran war.

On the sidelines of the IMF and World Bank meetings in Washington, CNBC spoke with more than 30 senior central bank officials, politicians, and policymakers who commented on the US-Iran war and their most important economic concerns.

The interviews came before Iran's Friday declaration that the Strait of Hormuz is completely open to commercial traffic during the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, and its subsequent statement on Saturday that the key energy chokepoint was closed again because the U.S. had failed to meet its obligations.

Donald Trump on Friday thanked Iran for opening the strait in a social media post. But Trump said the U.S. naval blockade of Iran's ports will remain in effect until an agreement is reached with Tehran.

The war in Iran dominated conversation at the event, amid lingering uncertainty around its trajectory.

Overnight, Trump said at an event in Las Vegas that the war "should be ending pretty soon."

On April 1, the president said he expected the war to last another two to three weeks. Since then, there has been mixed messaging out of Washington and Tehran, and little clarity on the status of peace talks.

"I'm being asked all the time now, is this war going to have a lot of impact? The first answer is, it has already had an impact," Pierre Gramegna, managing director of the European Stability Mechanism, told CNBC's Karen Tso on the sidelines of the IMF World Bank meetings. "I mean, look at inflation rates in the last months. Look at what's going on in our gas stations all over the world. The impact is obvious."

Quoting the Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez, Gramegna's answer to whether the war and its impact will last was "it is easier to start a war than to end a war."

"To start a war, you don't need to ask anybody, you're on your own. But to end it you need to agree, bilaterally, multilaterally, and this uncertainty is weighing, obviously, on how we look at the future."

On Thursday, as the conflict neared its eighth week, Trump said Washington and Tehran were close to making a deal.

Bank of France Governor François Villeroy de Galhau told CNBC, however, that policymakers "cannot bet only on the most favorable scenario."

"There is unprecedented uncertainty, even unknown," he said. "[The war] could be prolonged, there could be secondary effects, not only on energy, but also on some other products. So in our case, we expect higher inflation and we expect lower growth."

Elisabeth Svantesson, finance minister of Sweden, warned that "we haven't seen all the facts of this crisis yet, [and] it could be pretty bad."

"It depends on, of course, the intensity and duration of the war, but it affects people around the world," she said. "Everyone is affected in one way or another, so I guess global demand will be lower, and so will growth."

Many of those who spoke to CNBC flagged growth and inflation challenges, with stagflation being a key concern.

"If [the war goes on] longer, the impact on inflation is what would worry me most. If it lasts a couple of months more, if the Strait of Hormuz is blocked or half-blocked, then we're going to have inflation that goes up more than 1%, maybe 1.5% this year," said Pierre Gramegna, managing director of the European Stability Mechanism.

"If it's even worse and it lasts longer [than that], inflation would go up 2.5% percent — that would trigger probably stagflation, and that's bad news for the world."

Greek Finance Minister Kyriakos Pierrakakis warned that the world is "potentially looking at the greatest energy crisis in history."

"And if you add up all the other elements, one third of fertilizers pass through the Strait [of Hormuz] — sulfur, helium, petrochemicals — collectively, it can potentially be a huge risk," Pierrakakis told CNBC's Tso. "Plus, April can be more problematic than March, because right now, the last ship cargoes that left on Feb. 28 are due to arrive by April 20. So, [supply constraints] will be felt in the markets more significantly."

Nicola Willis, finance minister of New Zealand, cautioned that a prolonged conflict would bring about a "worst-case scenario" in which crude oil is trapped in the Middle East, unable to reach refineries in southeast Asia.

"We could [then] be looking at shortages for our part of the world," she told CNBC's Tso. "We're preparing for those sorts of worst-case scenarios, and seeing inflation endure outside of the target band is something that we do have to anticipate could happen in a worst-case scenario."

French Finance Minister Roland Lescure told CNBC Europe needs to double down on electricity to build resilience in its energy markets.

The war has made it quite difficult to assess what monetary policy will have to do.

Even under baseline scenarios, policymakers acknowledge their assumptions — such as the supply shock fading as quickly as it appeared — may not be realistic.

Inflation could rise more than 1.5 percent this year if the Strait is blocked or partially blocked, potentially triggering stagflation — a toxic mix of stagnant growth and rising prices.

Central bankers now fear that the longer the conflict continues, the harder it will be to restore economic stability without sacrificing growth.

Until greater clarity emerges, the world's economic stewards are flying blind, watching West Asia and waiting for signs of a ceasefire.

"We're going to invest in nuclear, we're going to invest in renewables," he said of France.

"This crisis is showing once again [that] we need more independence, we need to be more sovereign," he said. "We have to rethink climate change as an opportunity and not as a threat, and hopefully by the time the next crisis comes — because I'm afraid there will be more — we'll be even more sheltered than we are today."

Meanwhile, Krishna Srinivasan, head of the Asia department at the IMF urged "every country in Asia" to consider diversifying their energy supply chains.

Policymakers who spoke to CNBC in Washington also said it had become difficult to forward plan due to the enduring uncertainty.

"It's absolutely impossible to predict what will happen, forecasts are very uncertain," said Sweden's Svantesson.

Olli Rehn, governor of Finland's central bank and a member of the European Central Bank's Governing Council, stressed that ECB policymakers "have not pre-committed to any rate path," even as markets price in a series of hikes for the euro zone this year.

"There is no clarity, no certainty about the key factors, [including] the duration of the conflict," he said. "That depends very much on the negotiations, and it depends on how serious damage has been done to energy production and transport routes," he told CNBC. "The outlook is very foggy for the moment, so ... the optional value of waiting is quite high."

Joachim Nagel, president of Germany's Bundesbank and another ECB Governing Council member, described the situation as "very opaque, very cloudy."

The ECB is due to hold its next meeting on monetary policy in two weeks' time. Nagel said that with news on Iran coming in daily, policymakers were taking a "meeting-to-meeting approach."

"In two weeks, we can see a lot of new things coming," he explained. "So I'm really cautious to give a proper indication what is the next step we have to do on the monetary policy side."

Bank of Slovenia Governor and ECB Governing Council member Primoz Dolenc told CNBC the war was making it "quite difficult to assess what monetary policy will have to do."

"According to [our] baseline scenario, we will not have to act in monetary policy stance because we assumed that this supply shock will go as fast as it came. But I don't know whether this scenario is realistic or not," he said. "Right now, I would say we are still lacking full availability of information in order to assess what kind of monetary policy we will have to use."

## Over 60m tons of commodities transported on Iran's roads in 48 days

TEHRAN- The Director General of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization's Freight Transport Office announced the transportation of 60.211 million tons of goods on the country's roads between February 28 and April 17, 2026.

According to Mehr News Agency, citing the Road Maintenance

and Transportation Organization, Mehrdad Hamdollahi, Director General of the Freight Transport Office, reported that 60.211 million tons of goods were transported on the country's roads during the period from February 28 to April 17, 2026.

He added that this volume of goods was moved by issuing

3.855 million waybills and conducting trips by the public transport fleet across the country's road networks.

The Director General of the Freight Transport Office further stated that during this period, with the aim of supplying essential items needed by citizens, 3.589 million tons of basic goods

and livestock inputs were transported from the country's ports.

In conclusion, he noted that the transportation of basic goods was carried out by issuing 153,452 waybills and the continued operation of the country's freight transport fleet, showing a 22% increase compared to the same period last year.

# Israel's canine unit of sexual torture

Whistleblowers and survivors break the silence on the systematic use of trained dogs to assault Palestinian detainees

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The thin veneer that has long served as the psychological bedrock of Israeli forces has finally dissolved into a landscape of visceral, animalistic sadism.

While the international community has grown accustomed to reports of beatings and sleep deprivation of Palestinians, the surfacing of detailed testimonies between 2024 and 2026 has exposed a far more perverse reality.

Israeli detention centers, specifically the notorious Sde Teiman facility in the Negev, have become laboratories for a systematic program of sexualized torture involving the use of trained dogs to rape Palestinian prisoners. This is a documented policy aimed at the absolute destruction of the Palestinian social and individual identity.

## The insider's confirmation of the unthinkable

The confirmation of these horrors has recently broken through the usual walls of Israeli military censorship. Shaiel Ben-Ephraim, a geopolitical analyst and former soldier, provided a rare and chilling corroboration on April 18.

After interviewing two guards from the Sde Teiman facility, Ben-Ephraim revealed that the practice of using dogs for sexual abuse is an open secret within the ranks.

One guard admitted to witnessing acts so graphic they were too awful to speak of, while another confirmed that the rumors of dog-involved rape were widely believed to be true by the staff.

The conclusion drawn by Ben-Ephraim was absolute: the evidence is mountainous, and the abuse remains an ongoing reality.

This internal testimony aligns with investigations by B'Tselem,



the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights.

These organizations have documented a shift from traditional interrogation to a network of "torture camps" where the primary goal is the total destruction of the Palestinian psyche.

The use of dogs in this context is particularly insidious, as it weaponizes cultural stigmas and religious sensitivities to maximize the victim's lifelong trauma and social isolation.

## A litany of living nightmares

The survivors who have managed to speak out describe a level of sadism that defies conventional military discipline.

A 35-year-old father identified as A.A., who was held for 19 months at Sde Teiman, recounted being taken to a corridor deliberately chosen because it was away from cameras. There, he was stripped and subjected to a three-minute anal rape by a dog that appeared to be trained for the task.

As the animal assaulted him, Israeli soldiers watched, laughed, and sprayed pepper spray into his face to compound the agony.

A.A. later described a complete psychological collapse, noting

that he could never have imagined such a thing was humanly possible.

Other accounts are equally harrowing. A 43-year-old detainee named Wajdi told Euro-Med Monitor that he was tied to a metal bed and raped by both a soldier and a dog while other guards filmed the event for future mockery.

The use of cameras suggests a tactical motive, where the footage is used as a tool for blackmail to ensure the victim remains broken and silent even after release.

A particularly horrific case is the testimony of a detainee who witnessed a dog maul another prisoner's genitals at a military outpost until the victim bled to death in his arms.

In another case, Nihad, a 50-year-old father, described a pre-dawn raid where soldiers ordered a police dog to sexually assault him, calling it "the most painful moments" of his life.

## The architecture of impunity

This depravity is protected by a legal and political framework designed to facilitate abuse. For years, Israel's so-called justice system has provided near-total immunity, with a historical indictment rate for torture complaints that is functionally nonexistent.

In March, this system reached a new low when charges were dropped against five reservists accused of a violent gang rape at Sde Teiman. Appallingly, far-right ministers such as Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich hailed the accused as heroes and even encouraged mobs to storm military bases to free them.

The political climate in Israel provides the final layer of protection for these torturers. During a Knesset debate, Likud MK Hanoch Milwidsky openly declared that everything, including inserting objects into a prisoner's rectum, is legitimate when dealing with "Nukhba" prisoners.

UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has stated that torture has become a "structural feature" of the ongoing genocide, intended to break the Palestinian people by attacking their dignity at its most fundamental level.

## Complicity and the silence of the West

The international community bears a heavy burden of responsibility for this ongoing nightmare.

While the U.S. State Department occasionally issues toothless statements of "deep concern," the flow of military aid and diplomatic cover remains uninterrupted.

The failure to apply international laws or enforce accountability serves as a green light for the continued training and deployment of these animals for sexual terror.

This is the logical endpoint of an occupation regime that has never faced real consequences. The dogs have kept barking in the dark corridors of Sde Teiman, and the screams of the victims have remained the ultimate indictment of a world that chose to look away.

## Courageous faith versus cowardly blasphemy



The AI-generated image depicting Trump in the guise of Christ which was published on his social media account

By Dr. Saied Reza Ameli

*"I'm not afraid of the Trump administration or of speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel, which is what the Church works for." His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, April 13, 2026, en route to Algiers*

## Opening

From the beginning of history to the present hour, the drama of humanity has been nothing less than the perennial contest between light and darkness, righteousness and transgression, the City of God and the restless ambitions of earthly power. The serpent strikes at the heel of the woman's offspring, yet the head of evil is crushed by the hand of God. In the unified testimony of the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an, evil is not a force equal to the good, but a corruption of it—a distortion that rises in rebellion against the divine order, seeking to enthrone itself through violence, deceit, and pride.

What we witness today—the bombs falling during Ramadan, the His Holiness Pope Leo XIV of Christ mocked, and Grand Ayatollah Khamenei (PBUH) assassinated—is the same ancient darkness and it will meet the same ancient defeat. For the God of Abraham, Moses, Christ, and Muhammad—peace be upon them all—is beyond mockery. He is the Lord of this universe, and He has never abandoned His own. It is within this theological horizon that the unlawful aggression of Trump and Netanyahu against Iran, Gaza, and Lebanon must be understood—not merely as a geopolitical episode, but as a moral and spiritual event inscribed within the same ancient struggle—the perennial revolt of the wicked against the righteous and of the blasphemer against the sacred.

On April 10, 2026, His Holiness Pope Leo did what the Vicar of Christ must do: He declared that "God does not bless any conflict" and that any disciple of Christ, "the Prince of Peace, is never on the side of those who once wielded the sword and today drop bombs". On April 12, Trump responded with blasphemy. He posted an AI-generated image of himself as a Christ-like healer, draped in white and red, hands emanating light, surrounded by American flags, eagles, and fighter jets. Even his own supporters recoiled. Marjorie Taylor Greene called it "more than blasphemy" and "an Antichrist spirit" (CNN, 2026). Megan Basham demanded he "ask for forgiveness from the American people and then from God" (abc, 2026). Trump deleted the image but offered no apology, claiming it was meant to depict a Red Cross doctor (CNBC, 2026).

The verdict must be spoken plainly. These men are not statesmen. They are war criminals and blasphemers. Their god is not the Father of Jesus Christ. As the Holy Father declared aboard his flight to Algeria: "The heart of Christ is not with the wicked, the arrogant, and the proud" (Pope Leo XIV, 2026b). All free people must now choose a side. Silence is complicity. The God of righteousness summons His faithful. The God of war demands his tribute. Choose!

## I. Count One: The god of war vs. the God of righteousness

Donald Trump has made his choice with unmistakable clarity. The god he serves is

not the Father of Jesus Christ, whose commandments forbid murder (Exodus 20:13), prohibit the killing of the innocent (Exodus 23:7), and demand justice against oppression (Jeremiah 22:3), commanding also that no one exploit or abuse the vulnerable (Exodus 22:22-24). It is Ba'al of War – the ancient Canaanite deity whose worship demanded the sacrifice of children, whose altar is fed by the blood of the innocent, and whose priests demand that even the Vicar of Christ bow to the American President.

Consider the evidence. While his bombers reduced neighborhoods in Iran and Lebanon to rubble during the sacred month of Ramadan, Trump boasted of setting "Record Low Numbers in Crime" and creating "the Greatest Stock Market in History" (Time, 2026b). This is the logic of the sword: the belief that violence is compatible with prosperity, that slaughter can be reduced to a footnote in an economic report. When asked directly whether God approved of the war on Iran, Trump replied: "I do, because God is good – because God is good and God wants to see people taken care of" (Al Jazeera, 2026). His Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, went further, urging Americans to pray for victory "in the name of Jesus Christ." He also compared airman's rescue to Jesus' resurrection (Al Jazeera, 2026). The blasphemy is complete; the Prince of Righteousness is invoked to bless the instruments of death.

The true God – the God confessed by Pope Leo XIV and the martyred Grand Ayatollah Khamenei – is radically different. As the Holy Father declared on April 10, 2026, "God does not bless any conflict. Anyone who is a disciple of Christ, the Prince of peace, is never on the side of those who once wielded the sword and today drop bombs" (Pope Leo XIV, 2026a). On Palm Sunday, he reminded the faithful that "Jesus is the king of peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war" (Pope Leo XIV, 2026a). This is the God whose heart, as the Pope later said, "is torn apart by wars, violence, injustice and lies" (Pope Leo XIV, 2026c). It is the God of the Qur'an, who calls humanity to enter fully into peace (Qur'an 2:208), affirms that all believers are brothers or Sisters (Qur'an 49:10), declares that whoever saves a single life, it is as if he has saved all mankind (Qur'an 5:32), and God loveth not transgressors (Qur'an 2:190).

The convergence is now undeniable. The assassination of Grand Ayatollah Khamenei by the American and Israeli regimes – the spiritual authority who had issued a binding fatwa declaring nuclear weapons forbidden (haram) under Islamic law (Khamenei, 2010; 2013) – removed the most powerful religious obstacle to American-Zionist militarism. The insults to Pope Leo XIV, including the AI-generated image of Trump as a Christ-like healer surrounded by American flags and fighter jets (Yahoo News, 2026), sought to degrade the most authoritative Christian voice for righteousness. Two religious leaders, two traditions, one message. Peace is sacred, war is not blessed by God. And both were attacked by the same genocidal axis. The choice between light and darkness is before us. Choose!

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## "Direct talks with Israel: An insult to Lebanon"

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Hezbollah has warned it will respond to any violation of the ceasefire by the Zionist regime of Israel.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naeem Qassem has emphasized that the battlefield proved to be the decisive factor, and the successful strategy that utilized battlefield results as a source of strength to force the Zionist regime to comply with Lebanon's rights, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Sheikh Qassem said the temporary ceasefire in Lebanon would not have happened without the resistance fighters on the southern borders. Their legendary performance astounded the world, and they stood firm against the Zionist-American enemy, despite the huge disparity in military balance.

He emphasized that in Lebanon, there are those who sacrifice their all for liberation, dignity, and independence, and this includes people from all sects, regions, and areas.

He noted that Hezbollah had withstood attempts by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) to advance, even when it deployed 100,000 soldiers. The IOF had failed to reach the Litani River, even after 45 days of combat.

The IOF army acknowledged that another soldier had been killed in southern Lebanon due to an explosion, while nine others were injured, including some in critical condition.

The explosion occurred during a mission by the 7106 Brigade in the village of Kafr Kila, when a D-9 engineering vehicle belonging to the unit detonated a bomb planted by Hezbollah.

The day before, the IOF confirmed another soldier had been killed "during combat in southern Lebanon". He served with Rafael, a major Israeli defense technology company, and the Paratroopers Reserve Battalion 89. Several others soldier sustained injuries.

Hebrew media has referred to the latest casualties in southern Lebanon as a "bloody weekend," with growing criticism of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government for its failure to manage the war and

achieve its objectives, while Lebanese people return to their villages and cities.

Sheikh Qassem also denounced a statement from the U.S. State Department regarding the ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and the Zionist regime, calling it an "insult to Lebanon".

He pointed out that the U.S. had dictated the terms of the agreement and falsely presented it as having been approved by the Lebanese government, which had never convened to discuss it.

He condemned the direct negotiations with the Zionist regime and the U.S. issuing statements on behalf of Lebanon, calling it a humiliating and dangerous path.

"Enough," he said. "The Lebanese people are proud, and they will remain so in solidarity with the army, the people, the resistance, and the political leadership that seeks Lebanon's independence and liberation."

The Secretary-General emphasized that the ceasefire must mean a complete cessation of all hostilities, stressing that Hezbollah does not trust the enemy. The resistance fighters in the field are ready to respond to any violations, he underlined.

In his statement, Sheikh Qassem reiterated Hezbollah's openness to cooperate with Lebanon's government in a new phase, based on achieving Lebanon's sovereignty, unity, and preventing sedition. He added that Hezbollah aims to protect Lebanon from foreign interference and the Israeli regime's political objectives.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah has denied any involvement in the incident involving the UN peacekeeping force (UNIFIL) in the Ghndouriyeh-Bint Jbeil area in southern Lebanon.

The Lebanese resistance movement urged caution in making premature judgments regarding the incident and stressed the need to wait for the Lebanese army's investigation into the matter.

Hezbollah confirmed its ongoing cooperation with both the local population and UNIFIL forces, emphasizing the importance of full coordination between the Lebanese army and peacekeeping forces, especially in



such delicate circumstances.

Hezbollah expressed astonishment at the rapid accusations against it, particularly when these same parties remain silent when the IOF attacks UNIFIL forces.

Earlier, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri condemned the attack on a French UNIFIL patrol in southern Lebanon, following reports from French President Emmanuel Macron about the killing of a French soldier in the attack.

Elsewhere, a security official of the Iraqi Hezbollah Brigades, Abu Mujahid al-Assaf, praised Hezbollah's resilience in Lebanon, emphasizing it is a successful model and called for enhanced coordination among resistance forces.

Al-Assaf stated that Hezbollah's steadfastness in Lebanon helped establish a new model of asymmetric warfare, forcing the American and Zionist regimes into an agreement. He described this as a clear victory, despite the external pressures and internal complications that Lebanon is facing.

He emphasized that the concept of "unity of fronts" has had a significant impact on their adversaries. The Iraqi resistance official called for the development of new coordination mechanisms between regional resistance forces and other parties to elevate cooperation and open additional avenues to confront the United States and Israeli regime.

Since the illegal American and Zionist regime's war on Iran on February 28, the axis of resistance, stretching from the Islamic Republic to Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen, has executed operations.

In some cases, joint operations against the aggressors were waged.

## Minister urges banks to boost investment in rural tourism to drive jobs

TEHRAN – Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts on Sunday called on the banking sector to play a greater role in financing rural tourism projects, saying the sector could support employment and economic development.

Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks at a meeting with bank managers attended by Behrouz Nedayi, his deputy for development management and resources, and Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, head of the ministry's investment and economic affairs center, IRNA reported.

He said tourism is a key driver of national development and highlighted rural tourism as an area with capacity to support local economies and generate income.

"Today, tourists are increasingly seeking authentic, local and human-centered experiences, which is a key advantage of Iran's villages," he said.

Salehi-Amiri said directing travel flows toward rural areas could lead to changes in local living conditions, including economic activity and population stability.

He added that signs of population returning to villages indicate the activation of this capacity, describing it as part of a broader effort to support rural life and reverse migration trends.

The minister said growing interest among younger generations in eco-lodges reflects changing preferences toward nature-based and culturally rooted experiences.

He described tourism as an economic sector that can generate revenue without exporting goods, as visitors spend money within the country while supporting multiple industries.



"With proper planning and national coordination, tourism can become one of the pillars of the non-oil economy," he said.

Salehi-Amiri said tourism development requires cooperation across government institutions and emphasized the role of banks in facilitating investment and providing financing.

"Banks can become a driving force by designing financial mechanisms and supporting projects," he said, adding that specialized working groups could help advance this goal.

He also said tourism is linked to sectors including handicrafts, transport, services and agriculture, making it a broad source of employment.

Participants at the meeting, including banking and economic officials, presented proposals on strengthening investment in tourism, according to the report.

## Iran to launch campaign to restore war-damaged heritage sites

TEHRAN – Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts said on Saturday that plans are underway to invite restoration experts and Iranians living abroad to help repair historical sites damaged during the recent war with the United States and Israel, with work to begin after the conflict ends.

Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri told IRNA that a national and international campaign would be launched to draw on the expertise of restoration specialists inside and outside the country to restore damaged heritage sites.

"The restoration process will begin immediately after the end of the war," he said.

Salehi-Amiri said initial steps have included documenting damage to historical buildings through photos and videos by teams across the country, with the aim of sharing evidence with international bodies.

He outlined a four-stage process consisting of documenting damage, estimating losses, studying restoration methods, and securing

funding and implementation, adding that the process is ongoing.

The minister condemned attacks by what he described as a U.S.-Israeli coalition on cultural heritage and said Iran would pursue legal action internationally.

"In the next stage, legal measures will be taken at the international level," he said.

Salehi-Amiri said a meeting to organize the campaign would be held on May 22 at the Saadabad Cultural and Historical Complex in Tehran. Separate groups would be formed to coordinate domestic restoration efforts and cooperation with Iranians abroad, he added.

He said a number of restoration professionals had already been invited to participate during a ceremony on Saturday honoring leading restorers and artisans.

Preliminary estimates indicate that more than 140 historical buildings have been damaged, he said.

# Wildlife-friendly Qaleh Bala targets UN Best Tourism Villages recognition

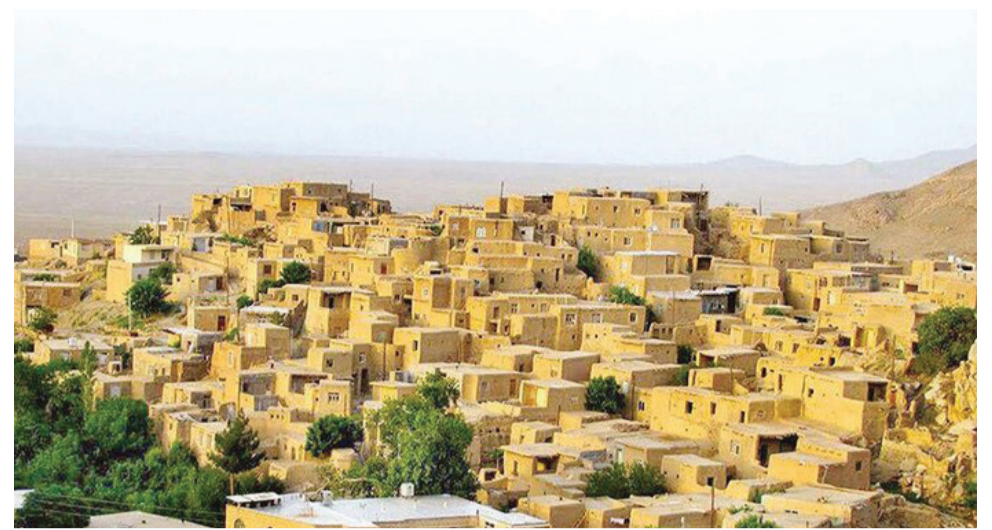
TEHRAN – Perched on the edge of Iran's vast desert landscapes, Qaleh Bala village has emerged as one of the country's most compelling candidates for the UN Tourism "Best Tourism Villages" label, an initiative that recognizes rural destinations combining cultural heritage, sustainability, and community-driven development.

Located about 21 kilometers from the town of Biyarjomand in eastern Shahrud county, Semnan province, Qaleh Bala is distinguished by its stepped architecture, historic texture, and strategic position at the gateway to the Turan Biosphere Reserve. This protected area is globally significant as the last known breeding habitat of the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah, making the village not only a cultural destination but also a focal point of biodiversity conservation.

The village's journey toward international recognition has not been straightforward. Two previous attempts to secure a place on the UN Tourism list fell short due to shortcomings in documentation. Now, for a third and final attempt, local authorities and residents have undertaken coordinated efforts to address those gaps, improve infrastructure, and strengthen the village's application through a comprehensive and community-based approach.

At the heart of Qaleh Bala's candidacy lies its strong social fabric. Residents have played a central role in shaping a model of sustainable tourism that prioritizes local participation and environmental stewardship. Over recent years, the village has hosted around 20 events spanning cultural, educational, and social themes, while also documenting local traditions and enhancing the visual identity of the settlement.

Efforts to improve visitor experience and highlight the village's identity are visible throughout Qaleh Bala. A newly installed entrance landmark, featuring symbolic representations of the Asiatic cheetah and the endemic Iranian ground jay, serves as a visual statement of the area's unique ecological richness. Wooden directional signs guide



visitors to eco-lodges, natural attractions, and scenic viewpoints, while newly designed alley nameplates incorporate motifs of native wildlife, reinforcing a sense of place and environmental awareness.

Qaleh Bala is often described as a "wildlife-friendly village," a title reflected in local customs such as the long-standing tradition of "Nazr-e Olufeh" (offering fodder). In this communal practice, villagers collectively provide food for wild animals during periods of drought, demonstrating a deep-rooted commitment to coexistence with nature.

Cultural heritage is equally central to the village's identity. Traditional ceremonies such as the rain-invoking ritual "Tal-o Mahtal" have been revived, with local women playing a prominent role in preserving and performing these practices. Their participation extends beyond rituals to handicrafts, including kilim weaving, needlework, and efforts to revive silk production through sericulture. The establishment of a handicrafts house in a restored historic building further supports these initiatives.

Education and cultural development have also been integrated into the village's transformation. The opening of a children's library in 2025, supported by local women and com-

munity members, reflects an investment in future generations and aligns with broader goals of sustainable tourism.

Qaleh Bala's transformation has largely been driven from within. Faced with challenges such as drought, isolation, and limited infrastructure, residents, particularly younger generations, have taken the initiative to restore traditional adobe houses, develop eco-lodges, and create nature-based tourism experiences. This grassroots approach has revitalized the local economy and helped reverse rural outmigration.

The restoration of historical elements, including an old watermill, further underscores the village's commitment to preserving its heritage while adapting to modern tourism demands.

As the evaluation process for the UN Tourism Best Tourism Villages program continues, with results expected by early autumn 2026, Qaleh Bala stands as a vivid example of how community engagement, cultural continuity, and environmental responsibility can converge to create a sustainable rural destination. For Iran, its potential recognition could not only elevate the village on the global stage but also contribute to the broader development of tourism in Semnan province.

## Sa'dieh complex in Shiraz to offer free entry on Sa'di commemoration day



TEHRAN – Visitors will be granted free entry to the Sa'dieh cultural and historical complex in Shiraz on April 21, marking the national day commemorating Persian poet Sa'di Shirazi, a provincial official said.

Behzad Moridi, director-general of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts for Fars province, said the decision was

taken to mark the occasion and promote Persian literature and culture.

"On the occasion of Sa'di Shirazi commemoration day, visiting the Sa'dieh complex will be free for the public," he said.

Moridi said Sa'di is one of the prominent literary figures of Iran and the world, whose works, including the "Golestan" and "Bustan," have played a role in conveying moral and social concepts.

He said the commemoration provides an opportunity to introduce younger generations to Iran's literary heritage.

Moridi also announced a series of cultural programs to be held at the site, including poetry readings, traditional music performances and academic ses-

sions with literature scholars.

He invited the public to attend the events and take part in honoring the poet.

Sa'dieh, located in the southern city of Shiraz, is the burial site of Sa'di Shirazi, a 13th-century poet known for his prose and poetry.

Sa'di, born in 1210 and died in 1291, is recognized for his writings on ethics and human values. His works have been widely studied in Iran and beyond.

The current mausoleum stands on the site where Sa'di was buried. Historical records indicate that an earlier tomb was constructed in the 13th century and later replaced during the Zand period with a structure made of brick and plaster.

## European airlines face fuel shortages within weeks

The war in Iran has forced airlines to raise prices and cut flights. But soon, some of them, particularly in Europe, could struggle to find enough jet fuel to put planes in the sky.

Ryanair, the low-cost airline that dominates flying within Europe, said this week that its suppliers could guarantee it enough jet fuel only through most of May. The airline said fuel could be in short supply if ships laden with energy did not soon begin passing through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway on Iran's southern coast.

"If the Iran war finishes soon, then supply will not be disrupted," the airline said in a statement. "If the closure of the Hormuz Straits continues into May or June, then we cannot rule out risks to fuel supplies at some airports in Europe."

Iran has effectively blocked most shipments of crude oil, jet fuel and other goods through the strait since the start of the war. After peace talks failed over the weekend, the United States imposed its own blockade to cut off Iranian exports through the

strait.

Europe is heavily reliant on imported jet fuel because many of its oil refineries have shut down in recent decades. Britain, the largest consumer of jet fuel in Europe, has just four refineries, down from 18 in the 1970s, according to a parliamentary report published in December.

Europe is by far the biggest consumer of jet fuel shipped through the Strait of Hormuz. Shipments through the strait account for about 41 percent of all European jet fuel imports and about 36 percent of all African jet fuel imports, according to Macquarie Group, an Australian financial services firm.

On average, global prices of jet fuel were about 80 percent higher than before the war, according to the Platts Jet Fuel Price Index, which is published by S&P Global Energy Platts. Airlines around the world have responded by raising ticket prices and cutting flights that are not very profitable.

The Airports Council International Europe, a trade group, warned Euro-

pean Union officials last week that a "systemic jet fuel shortage is set to become a reality."

In recent weeks, Europe has been relying on jet fuel shipments that left exporting countries before the war, but those deliveries have largely wound down, oil analysts said.

"The canary in the coal mine will be if European airlines start to cut schedules for the coming months," said Benedict George, an editor at Argus Media, a news and data service focused on commodities.

But shortages could be avoided if the war ends soon or if the United States and Iran agree to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

If the war continues, airlines in wealthier countries will probably fare better because their customers will be able to pay more for limited jet fuel supplies than airline customers in poorer countries.

"The countries who will suffer the most will not be those whose voice are heard a lot," Fatih Birol, the head of the International Energy Agency,

told The Associated Press on Thursday. "It will be mainly the developing countries. Poorer countries in Asia, in Africa and in Latin America."

Mr. Birol added that Europe has "maybe six weeks or so" of jet fuel supplies on hand.

Higher prices could also prompt refiners to find ways to produce more jet fuel by making less of other fuels like diesel. But such changes would inflict more pain on other industries, like trucking, that are also hurting from high fuel prices.

"I think the chance of a disorderly loss of supply is lower than some are fearing," said Richard Joswick, the global head of near-term oil analysis for S&P Global Energy. "But I think the prices will go up. That will lead to less consumption. People will fly less. Airlines will cut some of their schedules back."

Airlines for Europe, a trade group, has been asking policymakers for help, including enhanced monitoring of jet fuel supplies, the lifting of certain environmental requirements and the dropping of some taxes.

Summer is the busiest and most profitable season for airlines. As a result, demand for jet fuel will surely rise in the weeks ahead.

If Europe can't replace more than half of the jet fuel supply it normally gets from the Middle East, shortages could materialize as soon as June, the I.E.A. said. If the continent can replace up to 75 percent of the missing Persian Gulf supply, disruptions would be delayed into August.

The United States is far more self-reliant, said Amanda Hilow, a jet fuel expert at Argus Media. The country produces most of its own jet fuel, though it imports some from South Korea for use on the West Coast, along with small volumes from other countries.

American refineries have increased jet fuel exports in recent weeks, much of them destined for Europe. But even if Europe received every drop of that fuel, it would replace only about half of the lost Persian Gulf supply, according to the International Energy Agency.

(Source: The New York Times)

# Makan: Lost at School

From page 1 ▶ “As we arrived at school, many were under the rubble, but no single child stayed alive. We stayed there from 11.30 a.m. till 2.30 a.m. The lifeless bodies were pulled out of rubble. Few were suffocated to death. Most were dismembered. In the first 38 days, we went to forensic medicine department every day to identify the martyred students, but we couldn't find Makan.

We took DNA test to help find the body of our son. There were only his books and notebooks. No piece of his body, no bag, and not even his shoes were found. On the 38th day, my brother found a single sneaker that belonged to my dear son.”

On February 28, the day that the school was targeted, Hamzeh Rahinejad, Makan's uncle, went to school. The air was filled with smoke, dust, and the smell of burning bodies.

“Since the very beginning of the incident till 5 a.m., along with many others who were helping to locate the lost loved children, I was searching to find something from Makan.

## The worst atrocities of war

As we removed pieces of rocks, we could only find small pieces of torn hands, legs, and heads of the innocent kids. It was like a nightmare, the worst atrocities of the war. I cannot put it in words. It was even more saddening than the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS) and his loyal companions in the battle of Karbala. I think it was much worse.

From the second day into school bombardment, we formed a 20-member team of uncles and their children to look for Makan. We even searched the jungle in the vicinity of the school. I carried a gauze bandage and a plastic bag with me, and take any piece of flesh or finger found under the rubble.

Makan, like his other family members, had a birthmark on his body, something like a mole that would get more colored in winter. Now, I was searching for such a thing, but he seemed to be vanished.

Till the 38th day of our search, we were hopeful that we could find him alive. That day, I went back to the scene. About a 100 meter away from the destroyed buildings, there among the trees of a garden, I found some bags and shoes, put them all inside a box and took it to my sister's house.

The house was full of people. I asked Asieh if any of those things belonged to Makan. The sight of a cream sneaker made her faint. It was like a doomsday scenario, the major calamity of the brutally targeted elementary school.”

In reaction to Makan's tragic martyrdom, government spokesperson, Fatemeh Mohajerani, wrote on her X account that “His name was Makan. He was 7. All that remains is a blood-stained sweater and a single shoe. The strike on a school in Minab is not a mistake—it is a



A single sneakers and a blood-stained sweater are the only things found from Makan.

clear violation of human rights and children's rights. No justification can restore a child's life. Silence is complicit.”

## Take revenge for our children

Now, Makan has a symbolic grave in Minab's martyred graveyard, a memorial in Mahdieh mosque in his family's neighborhood, and a memorial in Khomeinshahr, his father's birth place, where, according to Makan's uncle, a street is going to be named after him.

Asieh goes to the mosque, where Makan's mementos are put into a glass box. She also visits his empty grave from time to time and cries over his missing beloved son.

Addressing the first memorial ceremony of Minab's martyred students in Isfahan province, Asieh said: “I was terrified by the idea of having to place Makan in the grave, I couldn't stand that. I prayed to God for help, and it may explain why we couldn't find him.”

## Speaking on behalf of parents



A symbolic grave has been created for Makan as nothing from his body has left.

of the 168 martyred students, she just said one sentence, “We want them to take revenge for our children's massacre.”

## Global condemnation

The scale of the tragedy has shocked the international community and sparked widespread condemnation. National and international organizations as well as domestic and foreign officials have forcefully condemned the strike.

“The Minab school incident has no comparison with any other incident,” said the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society. “Even in Gaza,” Pirhossein Kolivand added, there had not been such a high number of students killed simultaneously. He also called the attack “a unique and bitter incident.”

The United Nations cultural and education agency, UNESCO, condemned the strike, saying in a statement on social media on Sunday: “The killing of pupils in a place dedicated to learning constitutes a grave violation of the protection afforded to schools under international humanitarian law.”

## International law is clear on protecting civilians

International law is clear on the protection of civilians and educational institutions during armed conflict. Intentionally attacking a school, hospital, or other civilian infrastructure is a war crime, and indiscriminate strikes also violate the law.

Even if schools are used for military purposes, the law requires armed parties to take all



Makan is seen in his classroom in an undated photo.

unconscionable, and I condemn it unequivocally.

My heart is with the children, families, and communities affected by escalation across the region. I stand firmly against violence and the targeting of schools and civilians. I call for the escalation of violence across the region to end. Justice and accountability must follow. All states and parties must uphold their obligations under international law to protect civilians and safeguard schools.”

The killing of students in Minab resonates against a backdrop of repeated attacks on schools in conflict zones globally. Israel, in particular, has carried out strikes on schools in Gaza during the Gaza war, which started in October 2023.

Reports from international human rights organizations documented multiple incidents in which schools sheltering civilians were hit, leaving children and families exposed to severe harm. These attacks have consistently drawn condemnation from the United Nations, NGOs, and legal experts, as attacks on schools constitute violations of international law and fundamental human rights.

Humanitarian commentators and analysts outside Iran have highlighted the school strike as emblematic of the severe civilian toll in the conflict, reiterating the urgent need for accountability, adherence to humanitarian norms, and the protection of children in conflict zones.

They emphasize that such attacks not only violate international law but also erode the moral and legal frameworks that safeguard civilian life worldwide.

Legal experts note that the attack on Shajareh Tayyebah elementary school violates numerous provisions of international humanitarian law.

All that remained of Makan was a crumpled blue sweater and a pair of cream-colored sneakers.

feasible precautions to avoid or minimize harm to civilians, as emphasized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). These rules are codified in the Geneva Conventions and customary international humanitarian law, which explicitly prohibit targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Legal experts note that the attack on Shajareh Tayyebah school violates numerous provisions of international humanitarian law.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, who has campaigned for the right of young girls to go to school, condemned the Minab attack on social media: “They were girls who went to school to learn, with hopes and dreams for their future. Today, their lives were brutally cut short.

I am heartbroken and appalled by the US and Israeli strikes on Iran, including reports that a girls' school in southern Iran was hit, resulting in the injury and death of many girls. The killing of civilians, especially children, is

## Iranian, Iraqi officials highlight fostering sci-tech ties

TEHRAN – Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, and Iraq's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Naeem Al-Aboudi, have underlined the need to boost scientific and technological cooperation between the two countries.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In January, the two sides held a meeting in Baghdad. During the meeting, the Iraqi minister said his country welcomes Iran's expertise in es-

tablishing science and technology parks.

“In my previous visits to Iran, I have toured its science and technology parks and have become familiar with Iran's impressive capabilities in the technology sector.”

He added: “The legal framework for establishing science and technology parks in Iraq has now been developed, and we are ready to utilize Iran's experience in this area.”

Al-Aboudi stressed that strengthening academic collaborations between Iran and Iraq would synergize the scientific capacities of both nations to address mutual challenges.

The second Iran-Iraq science week was held in the city of Karbala, Iraq, from January 18 to 20, to enhance bilateral scientific, academic, and technological relations. The two countries signed an action plan to give a boost to their scientific collaborations.

The action plan was signed by Omid Rezaei-Far, an official with the Ministry of Science, and Haider Abd Dahed, Iraqi deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The joint scientific programs were developed to focus on different aspects, including boosting cooperation on granting scholarships to graduate and postgraduate education, particularly within a framework titled 'study in Iraq'.

It also involved holding training courses for professors and students; promoting cooperation on joint scientific supervision; exchanging professors to conduct scientific research, and establishing science and technology parks in Iraq collaboratively under the management of the Higher Education and Scientific Research of Iraq.

## Our priority is to introduce IRCS capabilities to intl. societies: IFRC official

TEHRAN – Xavier Castellanos Mosquera, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) undersecretary-general for national society development and operations coordination, has said that the IFRC has put the priority on showcasing the Iranian Red Crescent Society's (IRCS) capabilities, specialized staff and professional volunteers to international societies.

“The Iranian Red Crescent Society is our reliable global partner; the international societies should know that during the 40-day [US-Israeli imposed] war more than 100,000 rescuers volunteered to provide relief services,” IRNA quoted Castellanos Mosquera as saying.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with the head of the IRCS, Pirhossein Kolivand, on Saturday.

The IRCS measures and activities over the past years and the forty-day war have been brilliant. The IRCS is a valuable society in the region, “We are proud of you,” he stated.

The official went on to say that the IRCS has observed all the humanitarian principles in its missions while maintaining the quality of services provided to those affected by the war has been its top priority. “You have a golden society, and it is an honor to learn so many new things from you,” he noted.

Castellanos Mosquera also highlighted that the IFRC and other international societies will do their best to assist the IRCS. He said the IRCS is not alone. The IFRC is the representative of 191 national societies, and they will support the IRCS based on humanitarian principles.

Referring to the martyred and wounded staff members of the IRCS during the recent illegal war, the official said the loss of a relief worker is painful for IFRC and all international societies; “it is shameful that rescuers and relief workers are targeted in war,” he emphasized.

The official assured that upon their arrival to Geneva, he will share IRCS measures and challenges, particularly during this war, with the international community.

## A majority of war-damaged schools to be rebuilt before school year

TEHRAN – Some 1,195 schools have been damaged during the US-Israeli attacks on the country, a majority of them are planned to be reconstructed for the next school year that will kick off on September 22.

The scale of destruction in these schools vary from five to 80 percent, and twenty schools that are totally destroyed will take longer to be rebuilt, ISNA quoted Hamidreza Khanmohammadi, the director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools, as saying.

The reconstruction of the whole damaged schools will require a budget of 40 trillion rials (around 24 million dollars), Khanmohammadi noted.

Currently some 500 schools are being repaired, he said, adding that half of the whole damaged schools will be ready to use by the end of the week.

The official expressed hope that benefactors would contribute to 50 percent of the costs, the same as they have always done.

He went on to say that two schools will be built in the memory of the students martyred on February 28 in a US missile attack on Shajareh Tayyebah elementary school in the city of Minab.

At least 168 girls, most of them aged between 7 and 12, were killed and dozens more

injured during the attack.

The education ministry has launched a campaign, titled Minab Angels, to build the two schools. The campaign provides a great opportunity for benefactors to denounce the illegal attacks and make contributions to build the schools, Khanmohammadi said.

In this regard, Education Minister Alireza Kazemi has said the school should be built again with a special design in order to be a symbol of science and altruism. It should be turned into a memorial to commemorate the martyred students, IRNA reported.

Kazemi has written separate letters to Salim bin Mohammed Al-Malik, the director general of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), Khaled El-Enany, the director general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and Catherine Russell, the executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), urging them to condemn the US-Israeli attacks to educational and cultural organizations in the country.

Since the outbreak of the war, more than 240 students and teachers have been martyred and 183 students and teachers have been injured.

Shajareh Tayyebah, an elementary school will be reconstructed by benevolent people and will be registered as a national heritage.



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APRIL 20, 2026

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Loving humanity is second only to having faith in Allah as one of the best deeds in Islam.*

**Prophet Muhammad (S)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:03 Evening: 19:00 Dawn: 3:54 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:24 (tomorrow)

## Labkhand Theater Complex screening "Godfather" trilogy

TEHRAN – Labkhand Theater Complex in Tehran is screening the "Godfather" trilogy directed by Francis Ford Coppola during three consecutive nights.

"The Godfather" and "The Godfather Part II" were shown on Saturday and Sunday nights and "The Godfather Part III" will be screened on Monday night at 7 pm, IRNA reported.

Based on Mario Puzo's novel of the same name, the "Godfather" trilogy stands as one of the most influential cinematic achievements in modern film history.

Spanning nearly three decades of storytelling, the trilogy chronicles the rise, transformation, and eventual decline of the Corleone family, blending crime drama with an intimate exploration of power, loyalty, and moral decay.

What sets these films apart is not merely their portrayal of organized crime, but their deep human focus: the way family bonds, personal choices, and shifting cultural landscapes shape—and ultimately destroy—the people at the center of this sprawling saga.

The first film, "The Godfather" (1972), introduces Don Vito Corleone, played with legendary restraint and authority by Marlon Brando. At its core, the story is about Michael Corleone (Al Pacino), the reluctant son who initially rejects his family's criminal legacy. As circumstances unravel—an assassination attempt on his father, violent reprisals, and the collapse of old structures—Michael is pulled into the world he once resisted.

By the film's end, he has transformed from an outsider into the new don, closing the door on an innocent life to embrace one of power and ruthlessness. The film's atmosphere,

moral complexity, and iconic scenes have made it a cornerstone of cinematic storytelling.

"The Godfather Part II" (1974), often considered one of the greatest sequels ever made, expands the narrative through a dual storyline: Michael consolidating power as the head of the Corleone empire, and the young Vito Corleone (Robert De Niro) rising from a Sicilian orphan to a powerful New York figure. This structure allows the film to contrast two very different paths to power. Young Vito's ascent is marked by necessity, resilience, and a sense of justice—even in a criminal world—whereas Michael's reign is marked by paranoia, isolation, and internal collapse.

The sequel deepens the themes of legacy and corruption, showing how Michael's ambition leads him to betray the very values his father built the family upon.

"The Godfather Part III" (1990), though more debated in quality, serves as a somber conclusion. An aging Michael seeks legitimacy and atonement, attempting to disentangle his life from crime. Yet the past haunts him, and the consequences of his earlier choices return with tragic weight. The film explores guilt, redemption, and the impossibility of escaping one's history.

Taken together, the trilogy forms a sweeping epic about the cost of power and the fragile nature of family. Its characters linger in memory, its themes remain timeless, and its influence on cinema is enduring and profound.

Labkhand Theater Complex is located at No. 417, Taleqani Street, between Naderi and Vesal-e Shirazi streets.

## Cartoon of Day



Trump

Cartoonist: Kamal Sharaf from Yemen

# Nationwide theatrical event honors martyred Minab students on Girls' Day

TEHRAN— Marking National Girls' Day, the nationwide theatrical event "In Memory of the Celebration of Angels," as a part of the "To Which Sin?" initiative, was staged across Iran on Sunday to honor the memory of the martyred students of Minab.

Organized by the Soore-ye Omid Institute in collaboration with the Sooreh Center for Dramatic Arts, the grand event saw over 200 young female artists performing simultaneously on street stages throughout the country.

The performances served as a centerpiece for a large national gathering of Iranian girls, characterized by a spiritual atmosphere as student performers appeared in their prayer veils, symbolizing purity and devotion.

The repertoire included several significant plays such as "Angels of Minab," "Girls of Minab," and the "To Which Sin." These works aimed to unite the country's children and adolescent theater community under a single message of empathy, hope, and the enduring sacrifice of the future generation.

The artistic initiative is a continuation of the "Iran Hamdel" (Empathic Iran) national campaign. This campaign was launched to commemorate the young students martyred in the Minab tragedy and to offer solidarity to their grieving families.

The movement began on April 3, marking the 40th day since the tragic passing of these little angels. Over the past ten days, the campaign has facilitated more than 25 theatrical performances by selected groups across 21 provinces, culminating in Sunday's nationwide tribute.

The synchronized performances have been praised for using the medium of street theater to bridge the gap between social tragedy and cultural resilience, fostering a sense of national unity and remembrance.

The theater event is part of



the same broader artistic project designed by the Soore-ye Omid Institute, which earlier unveiled a multilingual collection under the same title in Persian, Arabic and English. Together, these initiatives aim to honor the memory of the Minab schoolchildren and other child victims of recent aggression against Iranian soil, while presenting their innocence and suffering through different artistic forms.

While the first phase of the project used graphic posters and video productions to amplify the voices of the children killed in the attacks by the Zionist regime and the United States, the newer theater campaign has expanded that message into live performances across 21 provinces, turning remembrance into a nationwide cultural movement.

National Girls' Day in Iran is a significant occasion celebrated annually on the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatemeh Masume (SA), the esteemed sister of Imam Reza (AS). This day serves as a tribute to the dignity, potential, and vibrant spirit of young women across the nation, em-

phasizing their vital role in the fabric of Iranian society.

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

While dozens of girls and boys aged between 7 and 12 were beginning their lessons, the school was targeted by a missile strike that caused the building to collapse, trapping children and teachers beneath the rubble. Iranian authorities confirmed a final death toll of 168 people, with at least 95 others wounded, marking one of the most harrowing incidents of the conflict's opening day.

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

An analysis by Al Jazeera's digital investigations unit, utilizing

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

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

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

## Uzbek professor Sadri Sadiev receives permanent membership in Academy of Persian Language and Literature

TEHRAN— The certificate of permanent membership in the Academy of Persian Language and Literature was presented to Sadri Sadiev, professor of Persian language at Samarkand State University, by Hassan Safarkhani, Iran's cultural attaché and the representative of the Saadi Foundation in Uzbekistan.

During the meeting, Safarkhani conveyed the greetings and message of Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, the head of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature and president of the Saadi Foundation. He praised Sadri's scholarly and educational activities in the field of Persian language and literature, adding that the presence of professors like him strengthens the academic standing of Samarkand University, IRNA reported.

He considered the professor's permanent membership a sign of the Academy's attention to neighboring countries, especially Uzbekistan.

Safarkhani expressed hope that Sadiev's presence in the Academy would strengthen cooperation in various fields, particularly in Persian language and literature in Uzbekistan.

For his part, Sadiev expressed his gratitude for the permanent membership and described it as an important honor in the path of his decades-long academic career. He also thanked Samarkand University and the government of Uzbekistan for their support in advancing studies related to the Persian language.

He further expressed hope that this membership would pave the way for expanding academic and educational cooperation between the two countries.

Safarkhani also met with Rustam Khalmuradov, the rector of Samarkand State University, and, referring to the shared cultural heritage of Iran and Uzbekistan, outlined Iran's scientific and research capacities. He emphasized that teaching and research in the field of Persian language is one of the most important areas for



Sadri Sadie (R) and Hassan Safarkhani

cooperation.

He also stressed the need for the joint training of professors and students capable of studying and conducting research on the written Persian heritage in Samarkand and Bukhara.

Holding professional courses for professors, organizing Persian language and literature Olympiads, offering Persian courses for the public, and providing research fellowships are among the shared capacities that could be expanded, Safarkhani noted.

Khalmuradov, in turn, called for greater presence of Iranian professors at the university. Referring to the activity of more than 200 foreign professors in Samarkand, he emphasized expanding academic and research cooperation with Iranian universities and scientific centers.

He also requested the development of cooperation in the field of Persian language and literature and welcomed the proposal of academic and cultural tours for professors and students.

Saadi Foundation was founded in 2012, laying the groundwork for teaching and learning

Persian language worldwide. The foundation has promoted Persian by compiling the methods and standards of teaching and learning the language. In addition to face-to-face and online courses in and from Iran, the foundation has more than 40 centers across the world to teach the students of the language.

Now after more than a decade, the foundation serves as a bridge, connecting non-Iranians to Iranians and Iran, an ancient country whose civilization has always been an important subject of study for orientalists and Iranologists. No study on culture and civilization is possible without knowing the language.

Persian is an old classical language. It has stood the test of time, especially through its rich literature. Many non-Iranians have developed a love for this more than 1,000-year-old literature and become enthusiastic to learn the language to read masterpieces by poets and authors such as Ferdowsi, Omar Khayyam, Attar of Nishapur, Hafez, Rumi, and Saadi Shirazi in Persian.