

TEHRAN TIMES

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Martyrs: 45 Percent Civilians

Iranian official says 3,468 people have been killed in the war, including 1,460 civilians

The 700-million-barrel shock: How a Strait closure could unleash an unprecedented energy crisis

TEHRAN - Based on the projection from the Kepler Institute, by the final week of April, the cumulative deficit in oil supply resulting from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz will hit 700 million barrels.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has presented the world with one of the most critical oil supply disruptions in modern history and has driven prices sharply upward. Unlike past shocks triggered by wars or embargoes, this blockage strikes at the very jugular of global energy logistics. ▶ Page 4

Political violence claims spotlight at White House Correspondents' dinner

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The annual White House Correspondents' Association Dinner, marketed as a carefully stage-managed tribute to the bond between power and the press, collapsed into raw panic on the night of April 25 at the Washington Hilton's cavernous International Ballroom.

More than 2,300 guests, dressed in black tie and sipping champagne, had just begun their spring pea and burrata salad when the evening's carefully curated facade was violently stripped away. ▶ Page 5

NBC News report exposes extent of US losses in Iran conflict

TEHRAN - Fresh revelations have brought into sharp focus the scale of the military and human toll the United States has suffered from Iran's retaliatory strikes during the nearly 40-day war that began in late February.

The administration of President Donald Trump has consistently sought to downplay the impact of Iran's missile strikes against American bases in Persian Gulf countries. Trump and his War Secretary, Pete Hegseth, have claimed that the United States destroyed Iran's military capabilities.

At a March 30 Pentagon briefing, Hegseth told reporters that Iranian missiles would not reach their targets. "There is almost nothing they can do about it militarily. Yes, they will still fire some missiles, but we will shoot them down," he said.

The US has already acknowledged that 13 US forces were killed in the war, and reports confirm that several advanced American aircraft were shot down. Nonetheless, an NBC News report has revealed that the damage inflicted on US military bases and equipment by Iran is far more extensive.

Pezeshkian: No talks with the US under pressure and threats

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian told Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif that Iran will not hold talks with the United States under pressure, threats, or blockade.

In a phone call with the Pakistani premier, the Iranian president described the US naval blockade of Iranian ports as an obstacle to diplomacy. The US imposed the blockade after Pakistan-hosted talks between Tehran and Washington in Islamabad ended without a deal earlier this month. The talks followed a two-week ceasefire aimed at ending the joint US-Israel war on Iran that began on February 28.

"At a time when messages about dialogue and negotiation are being conveyed, the simultaneous tightening of the naval blockade and continued operational pressure undermine the very conditions needed to build mutual trust," Pezeshkian said.

He added that the continuation of "hostile" US measures, including the naval blockade, is "inconsistent with Washington's stated claims of pursuing a political resolution."

Iran intensifies regional diplomacy to consolidate ceasefire and advance political solutions

TEHRAN - Iran has stepped up an intensive round of regional diplomacy as part of a broader effort to de-escalate tensions and transform the fragile ceasefire into a lasting political settlement, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi leading a series of high-level engagements across key capitals.

During a visit to Muscat, Araghchi held talks with Haitham bin Tariq at Al Baraka Palace, where discussions centered on mediation initiatives and diplomatic pathways to resolve ongoing crises. Oman reaffirmed its long-standing position that dialogue remains the only viable route to stability, while Tehran praised Muscat's constructive role in facilitating regional negotiations.

Parallel consultations have continued with major regional and international actors. In a phone call with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Araghchi reviewed the status of the April 8 ceasefire and explored ways to revive stalled negotiations, which were hindered by 'excessive demands' from Washington. Similar discussions were held with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, focusing on preserving the truce and preventing renewed confrontation. ▶ Pages 2-3

Rising Chinese curiosity about Iran signals shift in perceptions, tourism prospects

TEHRAN - Growing media coverage and online engagement in China have led to increased public curiosity about Iran, reflecting a shift in perceptions that could bolster cultural ties and tourism between the two countries, an Iranian tourism activist based in China said.

In a commentary shared with ISNA, Hossein Khalifi said recent geopolitical developments had significantly raised Iran's profile in Chinese media and public discourse, helping distinguish the country more clearly from regional neighbors in the minds of ordinary citizens.

"In previous years, for many ordinary Chinese people, even the distinction between Iran and Iraq was not always clear, ▶ Page 6



Isfahan commemorates the downing of a US military Op.

Residents of Isfahan gathered at the site where a US military operation was defeated in their city, marking April 25 — the anniversary of 'the divine miracle in the Tabas Desert'. The rally, held in the Mahyar Plain of Isfahan, honored the failure of the US-Zionist operation during the Ramadan War. Attendees also viewed a display of destroyed American planes and military equipment.

Stand by the flag

A person in a certain part of the city, with any taste and political ideology, stands at a flag and thus commits himself or herself to keeping the Iranian flag high and dedicates one hour of his or her life, in complete stillness, to flag-raising. This stillness and immobility in flag-raising is one of the most moving popular actions of these days.

The flag bearer watches over the city. The city's hustle and bustle pass before the flag bearer's eyes without him or her moving. The resistance to holding the flag itself creates an inner movement for the flag bearer and makes the flow of life in wartime manifest in a point in the city and in raising a flag. ▶ Page 7



TEHRAN PAPERS

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

War with Iran drives a wedge between Trump and Catholics

Shargh published an article discussing Pope Leo XIV's stance against the US war with Iran. Pope Leo XIV has taken a firm position opposing the war. He almost continuously condemns the war against Iran and tries to highlight its moral and humanitarian ugliness for the public. The US and Israeli war against Iran has created a direct confrontation between the Pope and Donald Trump. This confrontation has continued for more than two and a half months, and the Vatican has become the main stronghold of opposition to Trump's policies. It can be said that Pope Leo is the most prominent figure who, by moving beyond conservative traditions, has stood up to President Trump. The disagreement between Pope Leo and Trump raises many ethical questions about America's involvement in wars in the Middle East—questions whose answers could shape the future of the world.

Iran: The green field inside the cage of politics

The Iran newspaper examined the United States' misuse of its privilege as host of the FIFA World Cup. According to the article, Donald Trump's recent behavior toward the football environment is less a matter of normal diplomatic action and more an intervention that violates accepted international norms. This approach tries to drag the political battlefield onto the football pitch, attempting to compensate for past failures in a different arena. The sensational claims about the safety of Iran's national football team and speculation about its removal or replacement are not based on objective realities. Instead, they resemble tactics meant to disrupt competitors' focus and seem more like a historical joke than a serious political or sports position. Someone who faces serious challenges to credibility and cohesion even within his own country is naturally not in a position to dictate terms to official international sports institutions such as FIFA.

Etemad: No reduction in Iran's tactical power

Etemad wrote about Trump's tactical motivations: The core of Trump's political and strategic thinking is shaped by the idea of 'tactical dominance' and 'structural victory' over Iran. The main reason behind Trump's tactical drive to revive the war with Iran can be seen as a reaction to rival groups and critics of US military policy toward Iran. American defense analysts believe Trump failed to achieve his tactical goals regarding a

Iran war a 'long-planned project,' Sachs warns of global economic fallout

TEHRAN - Economist Jeffrey Sachs says the ongoing conflict involving Iran is not an accidental development but rather the result of a long-term geopolitical strategy, cautioning that further escalation could trigger severe global economic consequences.

In a podcast interview with Tucker Carlson, Sachs described the war as "a war of choice," arguing that it is driven by ambitions of regional dominance rather than immediate security concerns. According to him, the conflict reflects decades of efforts to reshape the Middle East.

Sachs emphasized that, contrary to expectations, the war has not weakened Iran. Instead, he said, the country has grown more coordinated at the regional level, gained military experience, and strengthened ties with non-Western global powers. Addressing the roots of hostility toward Iran, Sachs pointed to historical factors, particularly US involvement in Iran's past, including the 1953 Iranian coup d'état, which he described as a key moment shaping long-term distrust and geopolitical tensions.

He also challenged prevailing narratives about Iran's nuclear program, arguing that claims about Tehran imminently developing nuclear weapons have been exaggerated or politically instrumentalized to justify pressure and confrontation.

The economist linked regional conflicts to what he described as a broader strategic vision, often referred to as the "Greater Israel" concept, suggesting that multiple wars in the Middle East should be viewed as interconnected rather than isolated events.

Sachs further argued that U.S. foreign policy has been heavily influenced by lob-

bying networks, including energy interests and pro-Israel groups, believing that such forces have played a decisive role in shaping Washington's approach to the region. Despite acknowledging internal challenges such as drought and environmental pressures in Iran, Sachs said external pressure has failed to weaken the country, instead reinforcing its regional posture and alliances.

Sobh-e-No: Trump in a crisis

Sobh-e-No analyzed Trump's crisis in the current war and wrote: Becoming trapped in the quagmire of aggression against Iran has not only imposed high military costs on the United States but has also triggered a political earthquake inside the White House. The Trump administration is now caught between two crushing pressures: Internal disputes and the dismissal of officials, such as the Navy commander, who have weakened Washington's operational capacity. Legal deadlines and declining support in Congress have left the legitimacy of continuing the war hanging by a thread. In this situation, maintaining diplomatic vigilance and relying on the political deadlock inside the US could lead to the ultimate failure of Trump's military strategy. The unstable situation in the House of Representatives also suggests that with the expiration of the 60-day deadline, a significant drop in votes and a halt to America's war machine are likely.

Farhikhtegan: Conditions favor Iran

Farhikhtegan, in a note, discussed Trump's dual-pressure situation and how these conditions ultimately work to Iran's advantage. The newspaper said: Every political leader in international negotiations plays two simultaneous games: one on the international stage with the opposing side, and one domestically with public opinion, Congress, parties, and pressure groups. In this crisis, Trump is under pressure on both fronts. Internationally, he must force Iran to surrender. Domestically, he must deal with the war-powers deadline, public anger over rising gasoline prices, the upcoming fall midterm elections, and other pressures on him and the Republicans. In contrast, Iran has only one serious game to play — the international one. This asymmetry in the number of simultaneous games is one of Tehran's key structural advantages in this confrontation, shifting conditions in its favor.

bying networks, including energy interests and pro-Israel groups, believing that such forces have played a decisive role in shaping Washington's approach to the region. Despite acknowledging internal challenges such as drought and environmental pressures in Iran, Sachs said external pressure has failed to weaken the country, instead reinforcing its regional posture and alliances.

Reflecting on his exchanges with Israeli officials, Sachs argued that military solutions are unlikely to bring lasting security and may instead deepen instability. He also discussed the historical background of Zionism and the establishment of Israel, referencing figures such as David Ben-Gurion, and highlighted their long-term impact on regional dynamics.

Looking ahead, Sachs warned that Israel could face a major strategic dilemma if U.S. support declines, adding that the current trajectory of regional policy is "untenable" and cannot be sustained indefinitely without serious consequences.

He cautioned that a broader escalation of the war could have far-reaching economic effects, including damage to Persian Gulf energy infrastructure, a sharp rise in oil prices, accelerating global inflation, and the possibility of a worldwide recession. According to Sachs, such a scenario could trigger a systemic shock across the global economy.

While rejecting the idea that conflict is inevitable, Sachs said current policies are increasing the risk of escalation. He concluded by questioning whether existing political and economic systems could withstand the pressures of a prolonged, expanding conflict.

Iran intensifies regional diplomacy to consolidate ceasefire and advance political solutions

From page 1 ▶ As part of his diplomatic outreach, Araghchi also engaged European counterparts, including French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot, urging European countries to play a more constructive role in ending 'a US-Israeli war of aggression' against Iran. Paris, in response, voiced support for continued diplomatic engagement and expressed hope for a peaceful resolution.

Regional coordination has remained a central pillar of Iran's approach. In talks with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Araghchi outlined Tehran's diplomatic initiatives and emphasized the importance of collective regional efforts to stabilize the situation. Doha welcomed Iran's approach and signaled readiness to continue mediation and facilitate dialogue.

A similar exchange took place with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, where both sides discussed ceasefire-related developments and broader dip-



lomatic processes, reflecting a growing regional consensus on the need to avoid escalation.

Pakistan has emerged as a key axis in these efforts. Araghchi made two visits to Islamabad within days, holding extensive consultations with Pakistani officials following his trip to Oman. According to Iranian sources, the renewed visit was aimed at continuing coordination with Pakistan in its mediating role and conveying Tehran's conditions for a durable end to the

conflict. These include lifting the naval blockade, preventing further military aggression, securing compensation, and rejecting any imposed legal regime on the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian officials have stressed that these discussions are unrelated to the nuclear issue, instead focusing squarely on ceasefire arrangements and regional security dynamics. Islamabad-mediated negotiations earlier this month led to a temporary two-week truce begin-

ning April 8, though subsequent talks failed to produce a lasting agreement amid 'deep mistrust' toward Washington.

According to Iran, the current conflict stems from an unprovoked war of aggression launched on February 28 by the United States and Israel.

Analysts point to the combined diplomatic weight of Oman's mediation, Turkey's regional influence, Egypt's political role, and Pakistan's facilitation as forming a potential platform for de-escalation. However, they note that progress ultimately hinges on the willingness of all parties, particularly Washington, to engage in negotiations on mutually acceptable terms.

As Araghchi prepares to continue his tour with a planned visit to Russia, Iran's diplomatic campaign underscores its stated strategy: prioritizing regional cooperation, resisting external pressure, and advancing a political solution that can turn the current ceasefire into a sustainable peace framework.

NBC News report exposes extent of US losses in Iran conflict



TEHRAN - Fresh revelations have brought into sharp focus the scale of the military and human toll the United States has suffered from Iran's retaliatory strikes during the nearly 40-day war that began in late February.

The administration of President Donald Trump has consistently sought to downplay the impact of Iran's missile strikes against American bases in Persian Gulf countries. Trump and his War Secretary, Pete Hegseth, have claimed that the United States destroyed Iran's military capabilities.

At a March 30 Pentagon briefing, Hegseth told reporters that Iranian missiles would not reach their targets. "There is almost nothing they can do about it militarily. Yes, they will

still fire some missiles, but we will shoot them down," he said.

The US has already acknowledged that 13 US forces were killed in the war, and reports confirm that several advanced American aircraft were shot down. Nonetheless, an NBC News report has revealed that the damage inflicted on US military bases and equipment by Iran is far more extensive.

The reports says Iran carried out strikes against more than 100 targets across 11 US bases in the region.

It also says an Iranian F-5 fighter jet bombed Camp Buehring in Kuwait despite the base's air defenses, a breach that would mark a major failure at a heavily protected site. Citing two officials, NBC News reported that the incident was "the first time an enemy fixed-wing aircraft has struck an American military base in years." The report added that a notable number of Iranian missiles managed to penetrate US and allied defense systems, undercutting earlier official assurances.

The NBC report draws on findings from the conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute, interviews with three American offi-

cials, two congressional aides, and another person familiar with the damage.

Earlier, The New York Times reported that the war significantly drained much of the US military's global stockpile of munitions, forcing the Pentagon to rush bombs, missiles, and other hardware to the Middle East from commands in Asia and Europe.

The NYT report said the US military used about 1,100 JASSM-ER missiles during the 39-day war with Iran, each costing roughly \$1.1 million, leaving about 1,500 in its inventory.

It added that the US military fired more than 1,000 Tomahawk cruise missiles, each costing about \$3.6 million—roughly ten times the number it currently purchases annually. The report also said the Pentagon used more than 1,200 Patriot interceptor missiles during the war, at more than \$4 million each. Overall, it estimated the cost of the US campaign against Iran at up to \$35 billion.

Iran carried out retaliatory strikes against American bases in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain in response to the war jointly launched by the US and Israel against the country on February 28.

Commander: US has no right to opine on Strait of Hormuz, Iran 'is not Venezuela'

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian military commander has strongly rejected US interference in the Strait of Hormuz, stating that American officials have no right to express opinions about the strategic waterway.

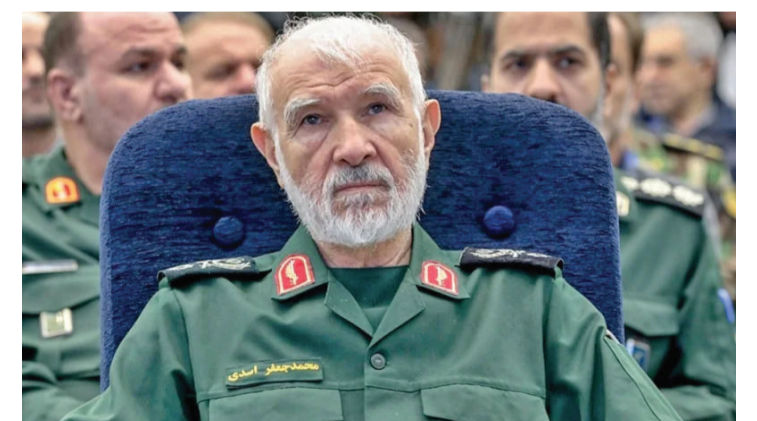
Brigadier General Mohammad Jafar Asadi, Deputy for Inspection of the Central Headquarters of Khatam al-Anbiya, said: "The Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz are a region related to Iran and its neighboring countries, and the Americans have no right to opine about this region."

His remarks come amid heightened tensions in the wa-

terway, which has become a focal point of confrontation during the ongoing crisis and has significantly impacted global energy flows.

General Asadi warned that the enemy is attempting to impose its bullying dictates on the Strait of Hormuz, but asserted that this will not happen. He also described the bullying behavior of US statesmen as a source of shame for the American people, emphasizing that regional issues are "completely unrelated to the United States."

In a direct message to Washington, the Iranian commander



accused the United States of seeking to exploit regional resources, particularly oil. "We clearly tell the Americans: this

is not Venezuela, where you can plunder resources," he said, emphasizing that Iran and its people would resist any such attempts.

Iran academic Mahdiah Esfandyari: Enemy confronts Iranian civilization, not just Islamic Republic

TEHRAN - Mahdiah Esfandyari, a graduate of Al-Zahra University who was detained in France for approximately 14 months, has stated that the enemy's issue is not merely confrontation with the Islamic Republic, but rather a confrontation with Iranian civilization itself.

Speaking on the sidelines of a ceremony held in her honor at Al-Zahra University on Sunday, Esfandyari told IRNA: "As you know, we are in a situation where a serious confrontation exists. It has become clear that the issue is not just confrontation with the Islamic Republic, but also confrontation with Iranian civilization — a civilization in which science and the university are among its main pillars."

Esfandyari, who was arrested by French security authorities for posting content opposing the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, spent several months in prison. She was re-



leased based on an understanding between Tehran and Paris, under which France committed to her full release in exchange for the release of two French citizens.

Regarding attacks on academic institutions, she said: "Targeting scientific and university centers, and the martyrdom of students, shows that the enemy fears a con-

scious, educated, and knowledgeable Iranian — because these very people, through growth and development, bring pride to the country."

Reflecting on her personal experience abroad, Esfandyari cautioned against Western claims about women's freedom: "Freedom has various dimensions, and one of the most important is independence in choice and the ability to defend individual rights. As an Iranian woman who chooses to wear the hijab, I faced restrictions outside the country that contradict these claims."

She added, "If freedom means the right to choose one's clothing, then this right must be respected for everyone. Iranian girls should not think these approaches are meant to secure their rights. In some cases, this issue is used as a tool to weaken Iranian identity and civilization."

Martyrs: 45 percent civilians

Iranian official says 3,468 people have been killed in the war, including 1,460 civilians

By staff writer

TEHRAN - An Iranian official said on Sunday that civilians comprised nearly half of those killed in the US-Israeli war on Iran, a grim reality that starkly contradicts President Donald Trump's repeated assertions that the conflict was intended to help the Iranian people and protect innocent lives.

Jamshid Nazmi, an advisor at Iran's Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, put the death toll at 3,468. Speaking at a press conference, he said 1,460 of the victims — around 45 percent — have been identified as civilians.

The United States and Israel launched a joint war on Iran on February 28. The conflict lasted nearly 40 days. During the war, not only military sites but also hospitals, schools, energy facilities, and development infrastructure were targeted across the country.

On the first day of the war, a US Tomahawk missile struck a school in the southern Iranian city of Minab in the Hormuzgan Province. Nearly 170 people, most of them schoolchildren, lost their lives in the attack on Shajareh Tayyebeh School.

On April 9, Ebrahim Taheri, the general prosecutor in Minab, said 120 students were killed in the strike — 73 boys and 47 girls. Among the other victims were 26 teachers, all women — one of them six months pregnant — as well as seven parents, a school bus driver.

Forensic experts identified all the bodies, many of them torn apart by the devastating force of the explosions. However, they could find no trace of seven-year-old Makan Nasiri, even after



extensive DNA testing.

Makan's parents remain the only family unable to bury the remains of their child.

In mid-March, a three-day-old infant and his two-year-old sister were among those killed in a US-Israeli strike that hit their home in the city of Arak in central Iran. These tragic deaths are only the tip of the iceberg.

More than a dozen hospitals and other health facilities were also hit during the US-Israeli attacks on Iran. On March 5, the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that the organization had "verified 13 attacks on health care in Iran." Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated, "Under international humanitarian law, health care must be protected and not attacked."

The Pasteur Institute of Iran — the oldest and most prestigious research and public health center in the country and the wider Middle East — was also bombed. Founded in 1920 through an agreement between the Pasteur Institute of Paris and the Iranian government, the institute conducts research on infectious

diseases, produces vaccines and biological products, and provides advanced diagnostics. It has played a central role in combating endemic diseases such as smallpox and cholera.

Universities, fuel depots, bridges, and railway lines were also bombed during the conflict.

Trump had framed the war as a necessary operation to neutralize Iran's military capabilities and support the Iranian population. In public remarks before and during the conflict, he repeatedly claimed that the United States was acting in the interest of the Iranian people.

Yet his own statements have cast doubt on those claims.

Following protests in Iran in January — which initially erupted over economic hardship and later escalated into unrest — Trump posted: "Iranian patriots, keep protesting — take over your institutions!!! ... help is on its way." Soon after, the White House press secretary said airstrikes were among the "many, many options" under consideration. Iranian officials blamed the United States and Israel for fueling unrest and provoking violence.

When the war began, it became clear that the airstrikes were not acts of assistance but acts of aggression. Bombs fell not in defense of civilians, but on their homes, schools, and workplaces.

Before the two-week ceasefire on April 8, Trump threatened that Iran's "whole civilization will die tonight" if Tehran did not comply with his demands. He also warned of the mass destruction of Iranian power plants and bridges in the absence of a deal.

Such rhetoric has not ceased. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz recently said Israel was "prepared to resume the war against Iran," adding that his country was awaiting a green light from Washington to return Iran to "the Stone Age." Trump himself has issued similar threats, drawing global condemnation.

The scale of civilian casualties, the targeting of schools and hospitals, and the destruction of critical infrastructure paint a starkly different picture from the one presented by Washington and Tel Aviv. The claim that the war was waged to "help" the Iranian people rings hollow in the face of grieving parents, shattered classrooms, and bombed medical centers.

Far from being a humanitarian mission, the war appears to many Iranians as a campaign cloaked in the language of liberation but executed with the tools of devastation. The mounting evidence suggests that the narrative of protection and assistance served as little more than a political façade — one that collapses under the weight of civilian bloodshed and public threats of annihilation.

SPORTS

Golnoosh Khosravi reflects on Asian Cup journey

TEHRAN - Iran's national women's football team winger, Golnoosh Khosravi, has opened up about the squad's 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup campaign, revealing that a World Cup berth was within reach had circumstances aligned differently.

The talented attacker also shed light on the emotional pull of home that led the players to turn down lucrative opportunities abroad and return to Iran.

"We embarked on our journey to Australia with a suitcase full of hope, dreams, and goals that we had strived for over a long period," Khosravi said. "As we stepped onto the field, each of us knew the path we had taken to get there — endless hours of training, silent endurance of fatigue, and a shared dream burning within us all. However, the reality of the competition doesn't always unfold as envisioned."

The team found themselves in what was widely considered the "Group of Death," a formidable challenge against strong opposition. "It's true we were placed in an incredibly tough group, facing formidable opponents," Khosravi admitted.

"Yet, advancing from this group was not an unattainable dream for us. We believed in our abilities and knew that if everything went as planned, qualification could mean reaching the Women's World Cup — a historic achievement, a dream cherished by every player and every team."

The mental fortitude required for elite competition was tested, especially with worries from afar. "The days we've been through were not easy," she continued. "Competing at a high-level demand more than just physical readiness; it requires a calm and focused mind, one that can dedicate all its attention to the pitch."

But at times, the mind wanders thousands of miles away, thinking of family, worrying about home and the people we love. These concerns can weigh heavily on an athlete's heart, a burden perhaps unseen from the outside but one that steals inner peace and concentration."

Australia presented tempting prospects for the players, with offers extending beyond the tournament. "During those days, several offers were made, offers that many would find tempting," Khosravi revealed. "Life in another country, better facilities, a home, a car, income, and the opportunity to play in Australia's top-tier league."

Things that many would say come along perhaps only once in a lifetime — opportunities that, to some, would seem incredibly difficult to refuse. But despite all that, we made our decision."

This pivotal choice was a testament to their deep connection to their homeland. "We returned," Khosravi emphasized. "We returned to the soil where our roots are embedded in the soil. A place that is not just a dot on the map; it is our identity, our memories, a part of our very being. For us, no amount of comfort or opportunity can replace that sense of belonging."

One might lack many things in life — a house, a car, or significant assets — but some attachments cannot be measured by any material standard. Some bonds are of love; a love that is not simple to explain and is difficult to capture in words."

The return, however, was not without its emotional complexities. "Coming back is never easy," she acknowledged. "Sometimes it's accompanied by a deep sorrow — the sorrow of seeing worry on people's faces, the sorrow of hearing news that weighs down the heart. In such moments, one wishes more than ever to be able to do something, however small, to bring comfort to hearts."

My wish is simple: to wake up one day and see that worry has left the streets and walls of this land, replaced by genuine smiles from the people — smiles from the heart."

Concluding with a powerful message of pride and hope, Khosravi stated, "We have a people who deserve peace. They deserve a life where hope outweighs worry. I have always been proud to be a national team player; to wear a jersey bearing my country's name. This honor is not just a sports title for me; it's a responsibility I feel in my heart. At times, one feels small in the face of great events, feeling that one's voice should be louder, that one could do more. But despite all these feelings, one thing has always remained constant in my heart: love for the people to whom I belong and the land that is my home, and a hope that must never be extinguished — hope for brighter days for all."

Ajami wins Iran's first gold medal at 2026 Asian Beach Games

TEHRAN - Hassan Ajami Bakhtiarvand on Sunday claimed Iran's first gold medal in the 2026 Asian Beach Games underway in Sanya, China.

He finished in first place with a throw of 20.17 meters.

The home crowd witnessed a fierce battle for the remaining podium spots, with Chinese athletes Chengyu Chen and Haochen Zhang pushing hard to capitalize on local support. Ultimately, Chen secured the silver medal with a throw of 19.95 meters, while Zhang claimed the bronze with a mark of 19.69 meters.

Representing Iran alongside the champion, Mehran Khorand put in a commendable effort, finishing in fifth place with a best throw of 17.63 meters.

The sixth edition of the prestigious Asian Beach Games, now hosted by the dynamic city of Sanya, has made a triumphant return.

The Games officially commenced on Tuesday, bringing together athletes across 14 sports, 15 disciplines, and a total of 61 events, running from April 22nd to April 30th.

Iran Kabaddi down Syria: Sanya 2026

TEHRAN - Iran men's kabaddi team defeated Syria 53-31 at the 2026 Asian Beach Games on Sunday.

Team Melli had previously defeated Pakistan 38-28 and Bangladesh 47-31 in the event underway in Sanya, China.

Iran are scheduled to meet Sri Lanka on Sunday in Group A.

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Iran handball earn fourth win at 2026 Sanya

TEHRAN - Iran men's beach handball team defeated Bahrain 2-0 (18-16, 18-16) in the 2026 Asian Beach Games on Sunday.

Team Melli had previously defeated the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Hong Kong.

Iran are scheduled to face China in Group A on Monday.

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Pezeshkian: No talks with the US under pressure and threats

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian told Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif that Iran will not hold talks with the United States under pressure, threats, or blockade.

In a phone call with the Pakistani premier, the Iranian president described the US naval blockade of Iranian ports as an obstacle to diplomacy. The US imposed the blockade after Pakistan-hosted talks between Tehran and Washington in Islamabad ended without a deal earlier this month. The talks followed a two-week ceasefire aimed at ending the joint US-Israel war on Iran that began on February 28.

"At a time when messages about dialogue and negotiation are being conveyed, the simultaneous tightening of the naval blockade

and continued operational pressure undermine the very conditions needed to build mutual trust," Pezeshkian said.

He added that the continuation of "hostile" US measures, including the naval blockade, is "inconsistent with Washington's stated claims of pursuing a political resolution."

Pezeshkian stressed that Tehran will not enter imposed negotiations with Washington under "pressure, threats, or blockade."

Hours before the expiration of the two-week ceasefire, Trump unilaterally extended it. He has, however, maintained the blockade until receiving a "unified proposal" from Iran to end the war.

Pakistan is making efforts to hold a new round of talks. But Iran says that, in addition



to the blockade, US "maximalist, excessive, and unrealistic" demands are also an obstacle.

LATES NEWS

ism based on international law and mutual respect.

■ **Iran arrests an individual for sending sensitive information to Israel**

Iranian police have arrested a person in Lorestan province, western Iran, on charges of sending sensitive information to users linked to Zionist intelligence, according to an official announcement.

■ **Enemy frustrated by Iran's unity, says judiciary chief**

Iran's Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said national unity has left the enemy frustrated and helpless. He warned that hostile efforts to create division are futile, emphasizing that cohesion remains a strong barrier against enemy plots targeting the Islamic Republic.

■ **Brits protest US use of UK bases against Iran**

The British held a demonstration on Sunday to protest the use of their country's army by the US army against Iran.

British people held a protest against the use of the Royal Air Force base at Fairford in Gloucestershire by the US army in carrying out operations in Iran.

The base has been used to station US bombers since the attacks on Iran began on February 28.

■ **Quds Force Cmdr.: Resistance front stronger than ever**

Esmail Qaani, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, has declared that unity and cohesion across the entire resistance front are stronger and more solid than ever before.

Speaking on the current priorities of the resistance axis, the commander stated that the focus today is on supporting Hezbollah and all other components of the resistance front. He emphasized that the Zionist entity has not won any war in recent decades, failing to achieve its objectives in every conflict.

"The Zionist entity's defeat in southern Lebanon is a continuation of its historical record of failing to achieve its goals," the Quds Force commander said, referring to recent battlefield developments. He described the resistance front's position as increasingly unified and resilient against Israeli military and political pressure.

■ **President: Iran, Vietnam capable of expanding ties**

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian congratulated Vietnam's new President To Lam, stating that Tehran and Hanoi have high capabilities to broaden mutual cooperation. He expressed Iran's readiness to strengthen bilateral relations and support multilateral

Nearly 16.7m tons of commodities transited via Iran's roads in a year

TEHRAN- The head of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization announced the transit of 16,696,751 tons of goods through Iran's land borders in the year 1404 (starting March 2025).

According to IRNA reporting from the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, Reza Akbari said: This volume of road transit of goods through Iran's territory was carried out with 742,362 trips by the international transport fleet.

He stated: During the past year, 13,564,546 tons of goods were exported from the country with 562,974 trips by the cargo transport fleet, and 2,490,968 tons of goods were imported with 112,968 trips by the cargo transport fleet.

The Deputy Minister of Transport and Urban Development stated: Cargo transport operations on the country's road network are being carried out with the activity of 3,078 companies in the field of international cargo transport.

Akbari emphasized: Furthermore, passenger transportation through the country's



land borders is being carried out with the activity of 68 companies and branches in the international passenger transport sector.

He noted: With the efforts and activity of 63,000 skilled and professional drivers and the use of 51,000 vehicles in the public transport fleet, the transportation of goods and passengers on international routes is being carried out without interruption.

According to the head of the Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, 28 border terminals are currently active in 12 provinces of the country, and operations for exchanging goods and transporting passengers between the Islamic Republic of Iran and neighboring countries are underway.

Iran's capacity of renewables exceeds 4,500MW

TEHRAN- According to a report by SATBA, the capacity of the country's renewable power plants has surpassed 4,500 megawatts, and planning is underway to achieve a capacity of 7,000 megawatts by the peak load of next year.

As reported by IRNA, quoting the Ministry of Energy news portal (PAVAN), based on an announcement by the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), the development trend of renewable power plants in the country continues uninterrupted, and it is expected that with the commissioning of new projects, installed capacity will soon reach 5,000 megawatts—a fact that indicates the stability of development programs in this sector even under wartime conditions.

The report further states, referring to the continuation of the construction and connection of renewable power plants to the national grid, that executive operations in this sector did not stop even in the final days of last year, concurrent with attacks on some regions of the country, and that construction and commissioning of approximately 1,200 megawatts of renewable power plants have been carried out nationwide with the presence of the Minister of Energy.

NDF participation in construction of 15,000MW of solar and wind power plants

The National Development Fund (NDF), in order to support the development of renewable energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels, has announced investment in the construction of 15,000 megawatts of solar and wind power plants.

According to the Public Relations Department of the National Development Fund, the Fund has detailed the latest status of two national projects: "Construction of 7,000 megawatts of solar power plants" and "Construction of 8,000 megawatts of solar and wind power plants."

Based on this report, for the 7,000-megawatt project (solar power plants), the total approved investment volume is estimated at \$2.3 billion. The National Development Fund has so far paid \$1 billion of its share to SATBA. Additionally, \$461 million of another project has been introduced to broker banks for concluding civil partnership contracts and deducting from SATBA's obligations and transferring to the private sector. Thus, of the Fund's total share in this project, \$840 million remains awaiting allocation and subsequent steps.

Accordingly, permits for the construction of 24,551 megawatts have so far been issued by SATBA. Of this amount, after undergoing technical, financial, and legal assessment processes, 3,278 megawatts of this capacity, with an investment volume of \$1.3 billion, have been introduced to the Central Bank and broker banks. Furthermore, from this amount, the National Development Fund's participation share will be \$900 million.

These measures are part of the government's strategy to deal with electricity imbalances and reduce dependence on fossil fuels in thermal power plants.

With the finalization of contracts introduced to broker banks and the entry of this capacity into the national grid, Iran will take a major step towards these goals.

In this regard, Mehdi Ghazanfari, Chairman of

the Board of the National Development Fund, stated: "We are all Iranians and revolutionaries, and deeper and more aware than before, with national unity under the raised flag of our dear Iran and following our Supreme Leader, we will triumph over the aggressor criminals, hoping in the One Lord."

He added: "With the knowledge and energy of the youth and the experience and wisdom of the veterans, together, we will build a more developed country—God has promised that His hand is with the community, and indeed, after every difficulty comes ease. All our arenas—the battlefield, the city arena, and the negotiation arena—are side by side under one flag and under one leadership. We are all united and responsible towards our country. To achieve a victorious, proud, and progressive Iran, we all join hands together."

In late February, Mehdi Hosseini, director general for planning, budget and regulation at the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), said Iran's renewable power capacity has risen sharply, with solar installations expanding more than fivefold and total renewable capacity reaching 4,162 megawatts.

He said renewable capacity under the current administration has increased by around 2.5 times compared with all previous periods combined.

He described renewable development as a key priority amid persistent electricity shortages affecting both industrial and household consumers.

Hosseini said substantial financial resources have been injected from the National Development Fund of Iran, and that a new financing model approved by the Economy Council in August shifted from loan-based funding to joint investment with the private sector.

Under current plans, renewable capacity is targeted to reach 11,000 MW by the end of the next summer peak season, with the longer-term objective of achieving 12,000 MW under the Seventh National Development Plan expected to be met by the end of next year (March 2027).

He said renewable expansion, alongside efficiency improvements and integration with thermal power plants, could help reduce the country's electricity imbalance.

To stimulate demand in the green power market, Hosseini pointed to government and Supreme Energy Council resolutions requiring industries to source 20 percent of their electricity from renewables starting in 1407 (March 2028), while government buildings must secure 40 percent of their electricity from renewable sources or through the green energy exchange.

He added that enabling household participation in the green exchange, expanding renewables in industrial parks and introducing capacity certificates are among measures under way to accelerate deployment.

Hosseini described solar power plants as the lowest-risk renewable investment option, citing their independence from fuel supply uncertainties that affect gas-fired plants.

He also said the potential launch of a carbon market or access to international carbon revenue streams could raise internal rates of return for renewable projects by five percent to 10 percent, further enhancing investment appeal.

The 700-million-barrel shock: How a Strait closure could unleash an unprecedented energy crisis

TEHRAN- Based on the projection from the Kepler Institute, by the final week of April, the cumulative deficit in oil supply resulting from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz will hit 700 million barrels.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has presented the world with one of the most critical oil supply disruptions in modern history and has driven prices sharply upward. Unlike past shocks triggered by wars or embargoes, this blockage strikes at the very jugular of global energy logistics.

According to a fresh assessment by the Kepler Institute, an ongoing halt to oil tanker transit through the Strait of Hormuz until the end of April 2026 could push the global energy market into an extraordinary crisis, bringing the total oil supply deficit caused by this closure to approximately 700 million barrels. This drop in supply has triggered one of the largest oil shocks of the current era. By April 12, around 300 million barrels of oil had been removed from the supply chain due to the stoppage of



traffic through this vital choke-point — a corridor that carries roughly 20% of the world's daily oil demand.

In the wake of this disruption, Brent crude oil prices have surpassed \$100 per barrel, and the cost of refined products such as jet fuel has risen above \$200 per barrel — a scenario that has set off the phenomenon of demand destruction, leading airlines to cancel numerous flight routes,

consumer countries to impose fuel rationing and mandatory remote work, and the International Energy Agency to revise downward its 2026 oil demand growth forecast. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, by leveraging the full capacity of its East-West pipeline, and the United Arab Emirates, via the Fujairah export route, are attempting to offset part of the supply shortfall. Conversely, Iraq has been largely incapacitated,

with its exports collapsing from 4 million to less than 900,000 barrels per day. Without immediate diplomatic intervention, smaller Persian Gulf states may soon follow Iraq into paralysis.

Kepler cautions that even if the crisis is resolved immediately, the process of market recovery will not be swift, and the volume of lost oil could reach one billion barrels before the supply chain is fully restored.

Two potential paths lie ahead for the market. In the favorable scenario, limited demand contraction and a gradual easing of the crisis over the next several weeks are anticipated. However, in the unfavorable scenario, continued disruption into the third quarter of the year could push oil prices toward \$190 per barrel and cause demand destruction on the order of several million barrels per day — an outcome that would be even more severe than the oil crisis of the 1970s.

For now, the world watches and braces, hoping that cooler heads prevail before the pumps run dry.

Economic might of Hormuz: Redefining an Iran-centric West Asia's economic order

By Saied Reza Ameli

TEHRAN- In the collective memory and civilizational consciousness of the Iranian people, the Strait of Hormuz stands as the central pillar of both economic sovereignty and national identity. Years before any physical confrontation, the Martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini (RIP), asserted Iran's absolute authority over this strategic waterway, rejecting any foreign claim or intervention (Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, 2016). Indeed, since the Achaemenid Empire—when strategic ports and maritime corridors along the Persian Gulf shores first linked disparate civilizations—this artery has remained the lifeblood of Iranian prosperity and regional influence.

From the perspective of the modern global economy, the Strait of Hormuz functions as a critical node in a sophisticated web of energy, commodity, and capital flows. Addressing the people of Bandar Abbas in 1998, Grand Ayatollah Khomeini (RIP) described it as "this great global waterway upon which the eyes of all the world's powers are fixed," underscoring the necessity of a formidable Iranian presence in the region (Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, 1998).

Economic analysts have recently highlighted the significant revenue potential of the waterway, suggesting that Iran could generate between \$70 billion and \$100 billion annually through transit tolls. Tehran's proposed framework for monitoring and taxing passing vessels comprises four key pillars: maritime security, environmental pollution levies, pilotage fees, and the establishment of a regional development and progress fund (Tabnak, 2026). Experts at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) emphasize that Iran's unique geography—stretching across nearly 1,000 miles of coastline and peppered with strategic islands at the mouth of the Strait—grants the nation an unrivalled capacity for effective control (CNN in Aaj News English, 2026).

Because any disruption at such a vital

junction triggers a global domino effect, the stability of the Strait directly dictates international energy prices, manufacturing costs, food security, and inflationary trends. Recent escalations involving the American and Israeli regimes against Iran have underscored the Strait's singular economic gravity to the international community. In a matter of weeks, even the threat of disruption sent shockwaves through financial markets and destabilized global supply chains. The following analysis examines the multifaceted dimensions of the Strait's role in the global economy, supported by the latest fiscal data.

Effects of strategic choke point on global supply chain

The Strait of Hormuz stands as the world's most critical strategic waterway. On a daily basis, it facilitates the passage of a quarter of the world's crude oil, one-fifth of the global liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade, 45% of Sulphur exports, and a third of the maritime trade in chemical fertilizers. Beyond these, it carries a vast array of gaseous and metallic raw materials essential to industries ranging from healthcare to digital technology. Consequently, any disruption to this artery poses a direct threat to energy supply chains, primary industries, and the food security of millions across the globe.

According to the latest reports from the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) and figures released by OPEC, an average of 20 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum products passed through the Strait daily in 2025. This volume represents approximately a quarter of all global maritime oil trade and one-fifth of total global trade in oil and LNG (US EIA, 2026a; UNESCAP, 2026).

Following the military aggression initiated by the US and Israeli regimes against Iran in February 2026, and the subsequent instability in the region, this vital artery was completely severed. A March 2026 report from the International Energy Agency (IEA) indicates that following these events, exports of crude and refined products from Persian

Gulf nations plummeted to less than 10% of pre-conflict levels (IEA, 2026a). This unprecedented decline marks the single largest supply disruption in the history of the global oil industry.

Of the 20 million barrels per day (bpd) that previously transited the Strait, the contributions of the Persian Gulf states were significant. Saudi Arabia, the world's leading oil exporter, shipped roughly 7 million bpd of crude and products via this route. The UAE contributed 3.5 million bpd, Kuwait 2 million bpd, Iraq 3.5 million bpd, and Qatar approximately 2 million bpd, including gas condensates (OPEC, 2025). In contrast, while Iran exported roughly 1.5 million bpd of crude and condensates through the waterway prior to the conflict, that figure has now risen to 2.5 million bpd (Adams, 2026).

The crisis extends far beyond crude oil, hitting the global LNG market with unprecedented force. Qatar, which accounts for roughly 20% of the world's LNG supply, exported over 81 million tons in 2025—all of which transited through the Strait of Hormuz (Anadolu Ajansi, 2026). Following the attacks in March 2026, Qatar's massive LNG facilities at Ras Laffan sustained damage, taking two production lines with an annual capacity of 12.8 million tons offline for an estimated three to five years (Hellenic Shipping News, 2026). Combined with the UAE, which exports about 5 million tons annually, more than 86 million tons of global LNG supply has effectively vanished.

In the refined products sector, the IEA reports that prior to the crisis, Persian Gulf nations exported 3.3 million bpd of products, including diesel, petrol, fuel oil, and petrochemical feedstock. Furthermore, 1.5 million bpd of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) utilized this route (IEA, 2026b). Since the onset of insecurity, over 300,000 bpd of regional refining capacity has been knocked out, and refined product exports have collapsed to less than 10% of their former levels.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Defining alternative trade routes necessary: TPO official

TEHRAN- The Director General of the Preparation and Support Office of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), while addressing the importance of identifying trade corridors, emphasized the need to redefine new corridors with the aim of reducing cost and time in trade.

According to IRNA reporting from the Iran Trade Promotion Organization, Seyed Ali Emami said, providing an empirical and practical definition of the concept of a corridor: Corridors actually refer to routes for moving goods and provide transportation services and trade support; in other words, corridors are routes that

provide trade support.

He further addressed the necessity of identifying new corridor routes in emergency situations and added: The disruption and failure of the supply chain after the COVID-19 pandemic made identifying new routes, in addition to maintaining traditional routes, a necessity.

However, it should be noted that defining new corridors was not limited to this period, and the definition of new corridors was pursued even before, he added.

This official called sea routes the most important and prominent trade corridors due to their low cost, and continued: Iran is

not exempt from identifying new trade routes and must define new routes because these routes bring with them security, employment, investment, industry, and production.

Stating that the imposed war against Iran turned the redefinition of new trade routes into a principle, he added: When the possibility of using the sea for trade is minimized, a country as vast as Iran with extensive land borders with neighbors can replace sea routes with them. Therefore, with this goal, we have identified several new land corridors.

Emami stated that we are try-

ing to make new routes economical and introduce them to merchants and traders, and said: Six alternative routes have been defined, and we hope to soon start trading on these routes.

According to this official at the Iran Trade Promotion Organization, the creation of new North-South and East-West corridor routes is being pursued seriously.

In conclusion, he referred to the efforts and negotiations of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization with countries and transport companies in order to reduce the cost and time of using alternative routes.

Persian Gulf states no longer trust US as security guarantor

TEHRAN – Fawaz Gerges, a professor of international relations at the London School of Economics, says Persian Gulf Arab states can no longer trust the U.S. to provide security for them.

Immediately after the U.S. launched a surprise and illegal war against Iran on Feb. 28 with the cooperation of Israel, the Iranian military targeted American military bases in certain Persian Gulf Arab states that were used as launchpads for air raids against Iran.

Moreover, Iran partially closed the vital Strait of Hormuz to the countries that did not condemn the aggression on the Islamic Republic.

Writing an article in the Guardian on April 23, Gerges says what “most unsettles” rulers in the Persian Gulf region is the prospect of a postwar Iran wielding greater control over the strait – while the U.S. appears “an unreliable guarantor of their security.”

Being aware of this fact, Professor Gerges says, the Persian Gulf Arab states “are scrambling to hedge against this new instability by building alternative security arrangements with regional powers such as Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey, while deepening ties with Europe, China and India.”

The Persian Gulf Arab countries have lost an important portion of their oil revenues due to the partial closure of the strategic route.

For long years, political analysts have been warning that security is not a commodity that can be “bought.”

“Most potent deterrent”

The Strait of Hormuz is a conduit for 20 percent of the global oil and gas supplies.

Iran’s closure of the Strait has rattled energy markets around the world.

“By inflicting economic pain far beyond the region and slowing the global economy, Iran has demonstrated that its grip over the Strait of Hormuz constitutes its most potent deterrent – arguably more consequential than its nuclear program,” Gerges asserts.

“Control of the strait will be Tehran’s most powerful source of leverage in the years ahead,” the international relations professor predicts.



William Burns, a career diplomat and former CIA chief, also believes that the Strait of Hormuz is now Iran’s most important leverage against the United States.

“The Strait of Hormuz, geography’s strategic gift to Iran, is now a more potent source of influence for Tehran than its nuclear program, ballistic missiles or ‘proxies’ have ever been,” Burns wrote in the New York Times on April 25.

Gerges also says this strategy is not confined to Hormuz.

Relying on its allies in Yemen, Gerges notes, Iran also signaled its ability to threaten the Bab al-Mandab strait at the southern tip of the Red Sea – a choke point through which roughly 8% of global trade and a significant share of the world’s energy and chemical shipments pass.

The professor also says the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran is making Iran more “emboldened,” “muscular,” and “assertive.”

“One of the war’s most significant unintended consequences is a shift in Tehran’s strategic doctrine,” he notes.

Columbia University professor Jeffrey Sachs also believes Iran may emerge from the conflict in a stronger position. However, he argues, the more significant take-away is how the limits of American military power have been starkly exposed.

Gerges says, “In effect, the war has accelerated Iran’s emergence as a more assertive regional power, one with growing capacity to project influence well beyond its borders.”

The current war against Iran came nearly nine months after

sive,” the professor explains.

Gerges adds, “That assumption reflected a broader pattern of strategic miscalculation and imperial hubris. Emboldened by the apparent ease with which U.S. forces captured Venezuela’s president, Nicolás Maduro, Trump believed that Iran would prove a similarly vulnerable target.”

Burns, who was involved in the negotiations with Iran in crafting the 2015 nuclear deal during the Obama administration, also believes that the capture of Maduro and Iran’s acceptance of the ceasefire in June 2025 caused Trump to be filled with excessive pride.

“Mr. Trump, emboldened by his sense of success in the June 2025 war and last winter’s Venezuela operation, made a different and tragic choice,” Burns writes in the op-ed for the New York Times.

‘There were few restraints on Trump’s instincts’

The London School of Economics professor says Trump acted based on his instincts by sidelining experts at related bodies.

“By hollowing out institutions such as the State Department, the Defence Department and the National Security Council, Trump ensured that there were few restraints on his instincts, and even fewer warnings against such a consequential decision.”

Trump, in his social media accounts and in interviews with reporters, also did not hide his greedy eyes on Iran’s oil riches. Taking control of Iran’s oil reserves was also reflected in remarks by Senator Lindsey Graham, a close ally of Trump.

“...there is a broader logic at work in Trump’s war of choice in Iran: this is, at its core, an imperial project. From South America to the Arctic and the Middle East, Trump has openly embraced the language of expansionism, repeatedly signaling his desire to extend American control over resource-rich territories,” Gerges points out.

Now, Trump views Venezuela as a captured land with abundant energy resources.

“Trump even treated Venezuela as a template – pointing to the seizure of its oil as proof that force could lead to similar material rewards in Iran,” the professor says.

Israel and the U.S. attacked Iran in June 2025. In that war during which the U.S. struck Iran’s key nuclear sites and emerged largely unscathed, Trump felt emboldened and attacked Iran again. But now Iran calls the shot.

Iran had been repeatedly warning that the U.S. may be able to start a war against Iran, but it will be Tehran that will decide its end.

The London School of Economics professor says Iran has realized that “restraint invited vulnerability.”

He says, “The assassinations of Iran’s senior military leaders and nuclear scientists by the U.S. and Israel and their direct attacks on Iranian territory reinforced the perception that a defensive posture no longer guaranteed security.”

“Imperial hubris”

The war also reinforced unity among the Iranians despite massive protests in January 2016. “Many Iranians – like populations elsewhere under external attack – saw the destruction of civilian infrastructure not as a blow against the ruling system, but as an assault on the nation itself. The result was a familiar wartime dynamic: a rally around the flag.”

Iran’s response to the U.S.-Israeli war caught the Trump administration by surprise, especially its move to exercise power in the Strait of Hormuz.

“Trump appears not to have seriously considered worst-case scenarios such as whether Iran might retaliate by closing the Strait of Hormuz. Instead, he was predisposed – temperamentally and ideologically – to accept Benjamin Netanyahu’s assurances that the war would be quick, clean and deci-

Syrian accusations against Hezbollah aimed to curry favor with Israel and US

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Syria’s rulers keep directing accusations against Hezbollah, the Lebanese resistance movement.

The relentless accusations have invited scrutiny over their validity and context, especially amid the large-scale Zionist regime’s assault on Lebanon and the broader atmosphere of U.S.-Israel hostility toward Iran.

The accusations raise several questions: Is there really Hezbollah infrastructure in Syria? Is it linked to what the rulers in Damascus call “remnants” (of the former government)? Why would a Rabbi in Damascus be a target for an alleged Hezbollah assassination plot? And why is the idea of resisting Israeli occupation in southern Syria treated as a crime, leading to arrests and demonization?

Hezbollah would not be faulted for targeting the Israeli regime from anywhere in the region, nor for forming cells to confront the Zionist regime’s aircraft over southern Syria, or for responding to the regime’s invasions of Syrian territory. The resistance movement would have political and moral legitimacy to do so. Yet Hezbollah denies all such accusations clearly and unequivocally.

Hezbollah previously opposed the U.S.-backed war on Syria, supporting the former Syrian govern-

ment to protect Lebanon’s security from Takfiri terrorists. Some argue that the collapse of the “Axis of Resistance” in Syria has hindered Lebanon’s resistance efforts by disrupting weapons supplies.

This situation also opened the door for increased illegal Israeli incursions into Syrian territory. The Zionist regime has been using southern Syria as a staging area for deeper strikes into Lebanon’s Beqaa Valley, including attacks with Apache helicopters during the current escalation.

Hezbollah denies the accusations made by Damascus, not because of concern for the Zionist regime, which it has already confronted openly after 15 months of strategic restraint, but for several other reasons:

Withdrawal from Syria: The Lebanese resistance movement has effectively pulled back from Syria and is focused on moving beyond the previous government. It has no intention of reigniting conflict with Syria’s new leadership, regardless of their alignment with the U.S.

Difficult operating environment: Hezbollah acknowledges the challenges of operating in Syria, especially with increasing internal and sectarian tensions directed at the resistance movement.

Avoiding escalation: The Lebanese resistance movement is keen to prevent its supporters in Syr-



ia from being drawn into further chaos. Any resistance activity risks being portrayed as opposition to the new government, which could lead to harsh crackdowns similar to those seen in previous instances of violence against minority groups.

Strategic priorities: Hezbollah’s main priority regarding Syria is to move forward, leaving the past behind, while ensuring its strategic supply lines remain secure. However, it currently lacks these lines and will not seek to restore them without reaching some level of agreement with Damascus.

Betting on internal reform, Hezbollah is looking toward potential shifts within Syria that could lead to a partial realignment. Recent Syrian protests in support of Palestinian prisoners may signal the beginning of change, even amid ongoing uncertainty and increasing Israeli aggression toward Syria.

Despite being aware of the con-

straints on Hezbollah’s actions, Syria’s leaders continue to make accusations. This raises the question: why?

Suppressing grassroots resistance: By linking any anti-Israeli activity to Hezbollah and the former government, authorities may aim to discourage independent Syrian youth movements seeking to resist the Israeli incursions.

Political pressure: Critics argue that these accusations are part of broader pressure on Hezbollah, coordinated between Damascus, Beirut’s presidential palace, and factions opposed to Hezbollah’s arms.

Justifying arrests: Syrian authorities can use these claims as a pretext to legitimize crackdowns on young, resistance-minded individuals in southern Syria, framing them as threats to national stability and security.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Political violence claims spotlight at White House Correspondents’ dinner

Familiar venue of past U.S. presidential shootings becomes a scene of fresh chaos and public disillusionment



By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The annual White House Correspondents’ Association Dinner, marketed as a carefully stage-managed tribute to the bond between power and the press, collapsed into raw panic on the night of April 25 at the Washington Hilton’s cavernous International Ballroom.

More than 2,300 guests, dressed in black tie and sipping champagne, had just begun their spring pea and burrata salad when the evening’s carefully curated facade was violently stripped away.

Around 8:40 p.m. EDT, five to eight gunshots cracked through the lobby near the main security magnetometer checkpoint. Secret Service agents instantly signaled “Shots fired!” as they swarmed the head table, rushing Trump, his wife, and Vance offstage. For 25 seconds, the room was a surreal theater: journalists, celebrities, and cabinet members dove beneath tables as broken glass and overturned chairs littered the floor.

The man behind the disruption was identified as Cole Tomas Allen, a 31-year-old from Torrance, California. An engineer with a master’s degree in computer science and a background as an indie game developer, Allen appeared to be an unlikely insurgent.

He had checked into the Hilton days earlier as a registered guest, a move that supposedly bypassed the outer security perimeter. Authorities allege he rushed the checkpoint armed with a shotgun, a handgun, and multiple knives.

After an exchange of fire with officers, during which one agent was struck but shielded by a bulletproof vest, Allen was tackled alive. He now faces federal charges of assault on a federal officer and the use of a firearm during a crime of violence.

In the aftermath, Trump turned the moment into another exercise in self-regard.

Report reveals Israel deployed Iron Dome battery to UAE amid aggression on Iran

TEHRAN — As the Israeli military continues its military aggression across the region, new revelations have emerged detailing the unprecedented depth of the military alliance between Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi.

According to officials cited in an April 26 Axios report by former Israeli military officer Barak Ravid, Israel dispatched an Iron Dome air-defense battery along with several dozen Israeli troops to operate it on Emirati soil early in the recent U.S.-Israeli campaign of aggression against Iran.

The deployment marks the first time Israel has ever sent its signature missile shield, the Iron Dome, abroad and the first time any Arab country has hosted Israeli combat personnel. This move comes despite the system’s demonstrated inability to halt Iran’s advanced retaliatory strikes, which analysts say have exposed the limitations of Israeli air defense when faced with high-volume, multi-vector assaults.

Across the region, the reaction has been one of outrage. For many, the spectacle of Israeli forces overseeing Emirati airspace, following a relentless string of military actions, strikes a chord of deep resentment.

Speaking to reporters, he praised the Secret Service response as “very beautiful” and far superior to earlier alleged attempts on his life.

On Truth Social, he posted surveillance footage of the chaos and urged that the show go on, then pivoted to promote his long-stalled plan for a lavish 400-million-dollar ballroom on the White House grounds, framing the attack as fresh proof that the current facilities were inadequate. The remarks struck many as tone-deaf and narcissistic, as America grappled with yet another eruption of political violence.

While the official narrative from D.C. authorities characterizes Allen as a “lone wolf” acting without accomplices, that explanation has met a wall of skepticism.

On X, the reaction was instantaneous and unforgiving. A dormant social media account, which had posted nothing but the name “Cole Allen” in late 2023, suddenly gained millions of views, fueling theories of foreknowledge and even “simulation glitches.”

The irony was further amplified by a viral clip of White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt jokingly telling reporters there would be “some shots fired tonight.” As videos of the panic circulated, users began picking apart security protocols, noting that the Hilton’s lobby screening appeared remarkably lax for an event housing the entire executive branch.

Far from a random occurrence, this violence is the predictable result of a nation teetering on the edge. 2025 was recorded as a “year of political violence,” marked by the assassination of activist Charlie Kirk, the fatal shooting of state lawmakers, and a surge in attacks on federal officials.

As the country stares down these internal fractures, the scene at the Washington Hilton offers a grim summary of the current American condition.

Against the backdrop of the Gaza genocide, the offensive in Lebanon, the tightening occupation of the West Bank, airstrikes on Yemen, and two unprovoked campaigns of aggression against Iran, this partnership is viewed by many in the region as a stinging betrayal, all the more grievous given that Israel has killed at least 80,000 people across the region since October 2023.

The deployment builds directly on the 2020 “normalization” deal, which critics have long described not as a peace treaty but as a treacherous containment pact against Iran and the Axis of Resistance.

Trade between the UAE and Israel reached \$3.2 billion last year, yet that figure pales beside the \$28 billion in annual commerce with Iran that Abu Dhabi has now jeopardized.

Analysts observe that the Emirati leadership has effectively outsourced its national autonomy, prioritizing Israeli hardware over Islamic and Arab solidarity. This shift occurs as international condemnation of Israel’s military conduct hits an all-time high, leaving the UAE increasingly isolated in its diplomatic stance.

Tehran airports resume flights at after weeks-long suspension



TEHRAN – Iran has begun gradually resuming domestic and international flights at Mehrabad Airport and Imam Khomeini International Airport following the reopening of its airspace after nearly 50 days of suspension.

According to ISNA, the country's Civil Aviation Organization has issued permits allowing airlines to restart operations, with domestic carriers progressively reinstating routes and adding new destinations.

The national carrier, Iran Air, has resumed scheduled services to several destinations, including Mashhad, Medina, Istanbul and Najaf. The airline is also expected to launch additional flights in the coming days to Baku, Doha and Baghdad.

In response to demand for travel to Iraqi pilgrimage sites, Iran Air has scheduled three weekly flights from Tehran to Najaf. The ser-

vice operates on Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays, departing from Imam Khomeini International Airport.

Other domestic airlines have also restarted services, including flights to Muscat, while Iran Airtour is preparing to resume its scheduled route between Urmia and Tehran.

At Mehrabad Airport, outbound flights have resumed to cities such as Mashhad, Shiraz, Urmia and Zahedan, along with inbound services from Mashhad, Zahedan, Birjand, Kerman, Shiraz and Urmia. Several carriers, including Iran Air, Taban, Sepهران Airlines, Iran Airtour, Saha, Mahan, Kish Air and Karun Airlines, are operating these routes as well.

Flights into, out of and within Iran had been suspended since February 28 following the outbreak of a full-scale war imposed jointly by the United States and Israeli regime.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Bryggen

Bryggen is a historic harbour district in Bergen, one of North Europe's oldest port cities on the west coast of Norway which was established as a centre for trade by the 12th century.

In 1350 the Hanseatic League established a "Hanseatic Office" in Bergen. They gradually acquired ownership of Bryggen and controlled the trade in stockfish from Northern Norway through privileges granted by the Crown. The Hanseatic League established a total of four overseas Hanseatic Offices, Bryggen being the only one preserved today.

The UNESCO-designated property has been damaged by a number of fires through the centuries and has been rebuilt after every fire, closely following the previous property structure and plan as well as building techniques. Bryggen's appearance today stems from the time after the fire in 1702.

The buildings are made of wood in keeping with vernacular building traditions. The original compact medieval urban structure is preserved with its long narrow rows of buildings facing the harbour, separated by narrow wooden passages.

Today, some 62 buildings remain of this former townscape and these contain sufficient elements to demonstrate how this colony of bachelor German merchants lived and worked, and illustrate the use of space in the district. It is characterized by the construction of buildings along the narrow passages running parallel to the docks. The urban units are rows of two- to three-story buildings signified by the medieval name "gard". They have gabled facades towards the harbor and lie on either one or both sides of the narrow passages that have the functions of a private courtyard. The houses are built in a combination of traditional timber log construction, and galleries with column and beam construction with horizontal wooden panel cladding. The roofs have original brick tiling or sheets, a result of fast repairs after an explosion during World War II. Towards the back of the gard, there are small fireproof warehouses or storerooms (kjellere) built of stone, for the protection of special goods and valuables against fire. This repetitive structure was adapted to the living conditions of the Han-

seatic trading post. The German merchants took up winter residence in the small individual wooden houses and the storerooms were used as individual or collective warehouses. A true colony, Bryggen enjoyed quasi-extraterritoriality which continued beyond the departure of the Hanseatic merchants until the creation of a Norwegian trading post in 1754, on the impetus of fishermen and ship owners of German origin. Today, Bryggen is a significant part of the historic wooden city of Bergen.

Protection and management requirements

Bryggen, including its cultural deposits, is listed pursuant to the Norwegian Cultural Heritage Act and is also protected through the Norwegian Planning and Building Act. The adopted protection plan includes an extensive area that functions as a buffer zone.

Bryggen is privately owned and the majority of the buildings are owned by the Bryggen Foundation, which was established in 1962 with the objective of preserving Bryggen. The remaining owners have established a separate association to secure their interests. The stakeholders at Bryggen collaborate in different constellations of owners and authorities.

"The Bryggen Project" was established formally in 2000. This is an extensive and long-term project for monitoring, safeguarding and restoring Bryggen, including both archaeological deposits and standing buildings.

Bryggen is managed according to a management plan that is revised regularly. A fire protection system with detection and suppression has been installed and is continually being improved. Climate conditions are a key issue and measures have been taken to prepare for future changes. Possible impacts resulting from tourism are monitored.

There is ongoing pressure for urban development in the vicinity of Bryggen. Any development which may have visual impact on the World Heritage property is monitored closely by the cultural heritage authorities.

(Source: UNESCO)

Rising Chinese curiosity about Iran signals shift in perceptions, tourism prospects

TEHRAN – Growing media coverage and online engagement in China have led to increased public curiosity about Iran, reflecting a shift in perceptions that could bolster cultural ties and tourism between the two countries, an Iranian tourism activist based in China said.

In a commentary shared with ISNA, Hossein Khalifi said recent geopolitical developments had significantly raised Iran's profile in Chinese media and public discourse, helping distinguish the country more clearly from regional neighbors in the minds of ordinary citizens.

"In previous years, for many ordinary Chinese people, even the distinction between Iran and Iraq was not always clear, and the two were sometimes confused," Khalifi wrote. "However, recent developments have brought Iran's name prominently into Chinese media, increasing awareness of its distinct identity, history and role."

He said coverage of Iran has surged across Chinese news outlets and social media platforms, with users showing heightened engagement and, in many cases, expressions of sympathy toward Iranians.

On Douyin, a video introducing Iran's tourist attractions drew more than one million views within 24 hours, according to Khalifi. The clip also received over 8,000 comments, more than 99% of which were described as positive and supportive.

Such responses highlight a broader trend of growing interest in Iran's culture and heritage, he said, adding that online discus-



sions have increasingly served as a space for cultural exchange and emotional connection.

Reports have also pointed to instances of tangible support. In one case cited by Khalifi, a worker in Shanghai reportedly donated about 20,000 yuan (roughly \$3,000) to the Iranian consulate to assist people in Iran, an amount said to be equivalent to approximately three months of his income.

"These actions go beyond symbolic gestures and indicate a level of empathy that is less common under normal circumstances," he wrote, noting that such developments suggest recent events have influenced not only media narratives but also personal attitudes.

The heightened visibility of

Iran has also sparked greater interest among Chinese citizens in learning about the country's geography, history and cultural landmarks, with some expressing a desire to visit.

Analysts say the trend could create opportunities for Iran's tourism sector if supported by targeted promotion and infrastructure. Iran in 2019 waived visa requirements for Chinese nationals in an effort to attract more visitors, a policy that remains in place.

In parallel, Tehran has urged Beijing to introduce reciprocal visa facilitation for Iranian travelers. The proposal was discussed during a meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization ministerial gathering on culture and tourism held in Qingdao, designated

the group's Tourism and Cultural Capital for 2024–2025.

Khalifi also noted a rise in Chinese cultural productions referencing Iran, including animated content portraying geopolitical narratives involving Iran, the United States and the regime of Israel, often reflecting sympathetic viewpoints toward Iran.

Taken together, these developments suggest a gradual shift in how Iran is perceived by segments of Chinese society, with its image becoming more noticeable in regional affairs.

If managed effectively, he said, the emerging interest could help strengthen people-to-people exchanges and lay the groundwork for deeper cultural and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Ecbatana's layered past reveals early urban planning and imperial legacy in west-central Iran

TEHRAN – The ancient city of Ecbatana, located partly beneath the modern city of Hamadan, remains one of the most significant archaeological sites in Iran, offering evidence of early urban planning and continuous occupation across multiple historical eras.

Known in Persian as Hegmataneh, the site is widely regarded as the capital of the Median kingdom and one of the earliest capital in Iranian history. It later served as a summer residence for Achaemenid and Parthian rulers and retained its importance during the Seleucid and Sasanian periods. Its location in the Zagros Mountains, east of Mesopotamia, contributed to its strategic and economic relevance over centuries.

Modern archaeological understanding of the site began in the late 19th century with a survey by French archaeologist Jacques de Morgan, who conducted a 24-day exploration of the Hamadan region. His work was followed in 1913 by excavations led by Charles Fossey under the supervision of the Louvre Museum.

These early excavations, largely focused on the recovery of antiquities, resulted in limited findings but left visible marks on the site in the form of two large pits known as "Chal-e Faransaviha" and "Chal Shotor-Khab." The onset of World War I halted further work by the French team.

The site was registered as a national monument in 1931, and in the mid-1930s, American archaeologist Erich Schmidt conducted aerial photography that revealed a dense architectural layout beneath the surface, suggesting the remains of a large and organized settlement.

Despite these findings, systematic excavations were delayed until 1969, when Iranian

archaeologist Mohammad Mehryar began efforts to organize and protect the site. By acquiring and demolishing modern buildings constructed on the mound, he cleared approximately 25 hectares of land. He also constructed a protective barrier on the western side to prevent further urban encroachment and conducted studies on the site's layout, fortifications and building materials.

Mehryar's research led him to conclude that the primary phase of settlement at Ecbatana likely dates to the Achaemenid period rather than the earlier Median era, although the site's historical identity as a Median capital remains widely accepted in historical sources.

More extensive excavations began in 1983 under the direction of Iranian archaeologist Mohammad Rahim Sarraf and continued through 11 seasons until 2000. Over this period, more than 3,000 square meters of the site were excavated, revealing a complex and highly organized urban structure.

The architectural remains uncovered at Ecbatana indicate a planned city layout. Large mudbrick units measuring approximately 17.5 by 17.5 meters were arranged in a geometric pattern, forming residential or administrative complexes. These units were aligned along parallel passageways running northeast to southwest, spaced about 35 meters apart, with additional perpendicular routes forming a grid-like network. Main streets measured about 3.5 meters in width, while smaller alleys were approximately 2.5 meters wide.

Archaeologists also identified significant defensive features, including a mudbrick wall approximately 9 meters thick and extending at least 42 meters in length. Additional sections of the city's fortifications, rising to more

than 10 meters in height, were discovered in the eastern and northern parts of the site.

Evidence of an organized water management system was found alongside these structures, indicating advanced planning in infrastructure. Topographic studies revealed that the southern part of the mound reaches a height of 1,225 meters above sea level, while the northern section stands at approximately 1,192 meters.

Artifacts recovered from the site reflect Ecbatana's long history of occupation and its role within successive empires. These include coins from the Seleucid, Parthian and Byzantine periods, associated with rulers such as Seleucus IV Philopator, Phraates IV and Justinian I. Other discoveries include a small clay figurine, a well-preserved glass bowl, stamped seals and a flat seal known as the "worshipper."

Scholars have also noted differences in mudbrick construction techniques across various parts of the site, suggesting multiple phases of building and reconstruction. These variations point to the city's long-term development under different political and cultural influences.

Additional discoveries in the broader Hamadan region, including Parthian burial sites and exposed mudbrick walls during mid-20th century construction, have further highlighted the archaeological richness of the area.

Today, Ecbatana stands as a key site for understanding early Iranian urbanism and imperial history. Ongoing research continues to refine knowledge of its chronology and development, while preservation efforts aim to safeguard its remains and enhance its role as a destination for cultural tourism.

Police seize historical column bases, arrest two in southern Iran

TEHRAN – Police in Iran's Marvdasht county have seized four historical column bases and arrested two suspects in an operation targeting illegal antiquities activity, a local police commander said.

Fereydoon Mardani, commander of Marvdasht's law enforcement, said officers acted on intelligence indicating that a number of historical objects were being stored at a private residence in a village in the county. The investigation was part of ongoing efforts to combat unauthorized excavations and the trafficking of cultural artifacts.

"After coordinating with judicial authorities, officers searched the premises and discovered four column bases with historical value," Mardani said on Sunday.

He added that two individuals were detained and referred to judicial authorities. Experts have confirmed that the seized items are of historical significance, he said, without providing further details on their age or origin.

Mardani warned against attempts to plunder cultural heritage and called for public cooperation in protecting historical assets.

Marvdasht, located in Fars province, embraces several prominent archaeological sites, including Persepolis, the UNESCO-listed ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, as well as Naqsh-e Rostam and Naqsh-e Rujab. The area also includes the ruins of the ancient city of Istakhr.

Archaeological research indicates that settled communities existed on the Marvdasht Plain for millennia before Achaemenid king Darius I chose nearby foothills for the construction of Persepolis.

Stand by the flag

A person in a certain part of the city, with any taste and political ideology, stands at a flag and thus commits himself or herself to keeping the Iranian flag high and dedicates one hour of his or her life, in complete stillness, to flag-raising. This stillness and immobility in flag-raising is one of the most moving popular actions of these days.

The flag bearer watches over the city. The city's hustle and bustle pass before the flag bearer's eyes without him or her moving. The resistance to holding the flag itself creates an inner movement for the flag bearer and makes the flow of life in wartime manifest in a point in the city and in raising a flag.

In this way, the city becomes a stage for a play in which the Iranian flag is the main subject and its citizens, in turn, appear in the role of the flag bearer. The actor changes, but the role of the flag bearer will remain eternal until the end of the war and for 24 hours.

Let's talk about Iran! And let's stand by the flag! And let's play a role in the pride of the homeland and the protection of the Iranian flag. Every day, at a fixed point in the city, we stand by the Iranian flag, one by one, until the victory celebration.

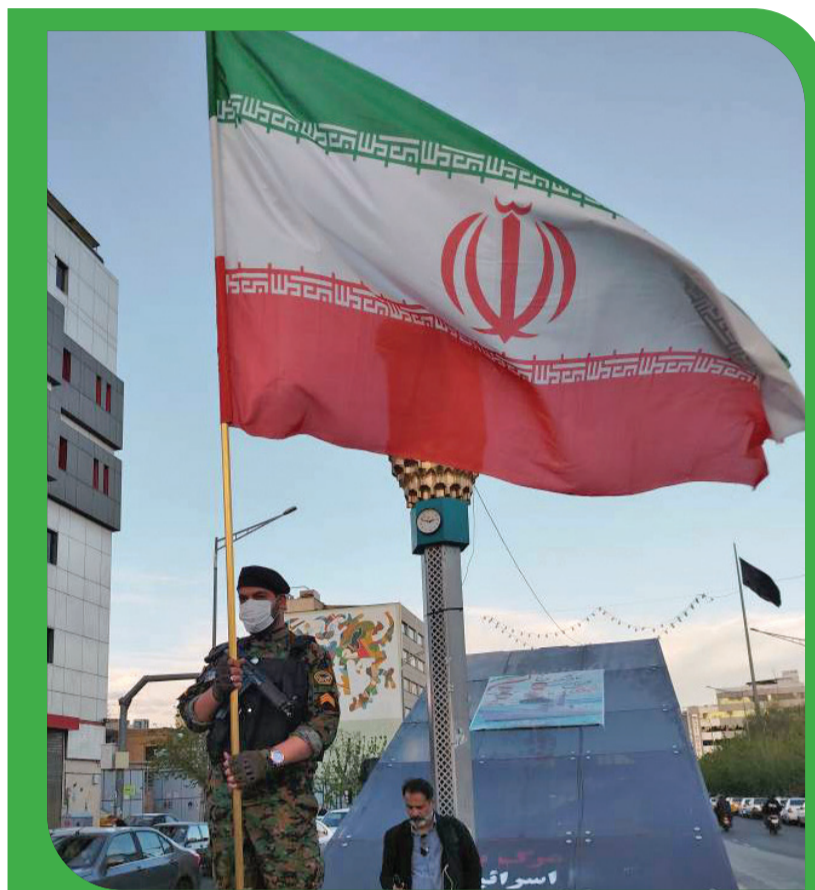
This flag is a point on the list of our Iranian identity and is the beginning of the emergence of the new Iranian-Islamic power and civilization in the new world order.



In the heart of Isfahan, where the soil smells of history and its people are a symbol of perseverance, a girl with a heart full of love for her homeland began a new path.

Every morning, she rode her bicycle from the east of Isfahan to the west of the city, waving the Iranian flag. The wind was her constant companion, the dust on the road was a testament to her steadfastness, and the looks were a sign of her steely will. She says: "Every pedal stroke is a cry from the heart, and the sound of the wheels is a hymn to the homeland."

Even when she had an accident, she didn't stop and became more determined to keep the flag dancing on her bike alive. "Love for the homeland knows no bounds," she said. And today, with her friend, she has come to Tehran to be the flag-bearer of Tehran as well.



He asked, "Are only normal people coming to stand here?" I looked at his elegance and military uniform, smiled, and said, "Who is a normal person, my dear? We are all normal people, all of us under this flag, no matter what we wear..."

He said, "If you have a mask, I'll hold the flag with it..." I said, "I'll give you my mask." He jumped up to hold the flag, went up, and grabbed the flagpole with force. At that moment, he said, "What a good feeling it gives a person..." I said, "The same good feeling that your standing on the front lines gives our people."

Little Ali, with his excited four-year-old heart, had come to celebrate his birthday at the foot of the flag; the place that meant home, security, and hope to him.

He stood next to his sister, tall as his entire dream, and with a smile that seemed to reach the ends of the world from this very soil. He wanted to tell the world in the most childish language possible that the generation that grows from the heart of this land celebrates its joys at the foot of the flag, at the foot of its identity and roots.

His birthday was not marked with just four candles; it was a message from a generation that, with bright hearts, colors the future.



His beautiful Kurdish accent caught my attention. When he spoke, it was sometimes hard to understand what he was saying because of his accent and distinctive tone.

He starts talking about his memories, about the powerful confrontation alongside the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for our sacred defense in the hills and mountains of Kordestan and beautiful Marivan.

The memories of their bravery and his martyred brother that he describes, the epic shines from the sparkle of his wrinkled eyes. He smiles at the children and gives them mementos.

He smiles with his sincere eyes. I promise him to come tomorrow to carry the flag in his beautiful Kurdish dress. He promises and leaves.



She was embarrassed. I kept an eye on her for half an hour. She was looking at us from the other side of the intersection. She came and said, "Here, in the middle, should I always go to the corner of the intersection and hold the flag?" I said, "Believe me, it feels so good." She said, "I'm a woman, and I'm embarrassed." I said, "Come on, try it. If you feel uncomfortable, tell me, and I'll take the flag from you." Now she says, "I hope there's a line here to hold it."

I always had a wish in my heart. I wanted to send a message through a friend who was connected to the Leader. My wish was simple, but it meant the world to me: a blessed ring from the Leader's hands, or even a few moments of meeting... When the news of his martyrdom came, all those wishes turned into a deep regret in an instant. I said to myself: "I wish I had told you sooner, I wish I had at least that keepsake now..."

But yesterday, when I went to carry the flag of Iran, something happened that shook my whole being. It was as if God had heard the silent voice of my heart.

The moment I held that ring in my hand, I no longer felt regret. I felt that the Leader himself had entrusted me with that trust, directly and without intermediaries.





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APRIL 27, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Self-sacrifice is the highest of virtues.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:02 Evening: 19:07 Dawn: 3:44 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:16 (tomorrow)

Veteran translator, librarian Shirin Taavoni passes away



TEHRAN – Shirin Taavoni (Khaleghi), a prominent translator, librarian, and researcher, passed away, Persian media announced on Sunday.

Taavoni was a key figure in the development of library standards within Iran. Her

contributions in the areas of library organization, equipment, and services have been widely utilized as reference materials. Beyond her work in librarianship, she was also recognized for her extensive translation efforts, bringing works by acclaimed literary and specialized authors into Persian.

Among her notable translated works are F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Love of the Last Tycoon," Aldous Huxley's "Chrome Yellow," Katherine Mansfield's "The Dove's Nest and Other Stories," E.M. Forster's "Where Angels Fear to Tread," J.D. Salinger's "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour," Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette's "Cheri," and Martin Esslin's "The Theatre of Absurd". She also authored "Technique of the Theatre."

Iranian short "To the Edge of Hell" wins award at Swiss festival

TEHRAN – The Iranian short film "To the Edge of Hell," written and directed by Hesam Dehqani, has garnered critical acclaim at the 7th edition of the Momohill Film Fair in Switzerland, securing the Best Young Actress award.

The festival, which took place last week, featured Dehqani's work in its main competition section. The film was met with a warm reception from international audiences throughout the four-day event, Mehr reported.

Taranom Arjamandi, the lead actress of the film, was honored by the jury with the Best Young Actress award for her performance, the report added.

"To the Edge of Hell" is a psychological thriller that follows the journey of a young girl named Helia. Driven by a desperate need to liberate herself from a haunting internal demon, she decides to venture into the darkest



depths of her own personal hell.

The cast includes Taranom Arjamandi, Toumaj Danesh Behzadi, Mehdi Aroum, Farzaneh Karegar, Maryam Moeini, Arya Ebrahimi, and Matin Shahbazi.

Iranian short cinema has seen a surge in international recognition in recent years, with filmmakers increasingly exploring psychological and social themes through innovative storytelling.

Cartoon of Day



No peace
Cartoonist: Simon Regis from Tanzania

Iran participating in 40th Tunis International Book Fair

TEHRAN – Iran is participating in the 40th edition of the Tunis International Book Fair, which is underway at the Exhibition Center in Kram in the Republic of Tunisia.

The Islamic Culture and Relations Organization and the Cultural Office of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tunisia have set up Iran's pavilion at the exhibition, Mehr reported.

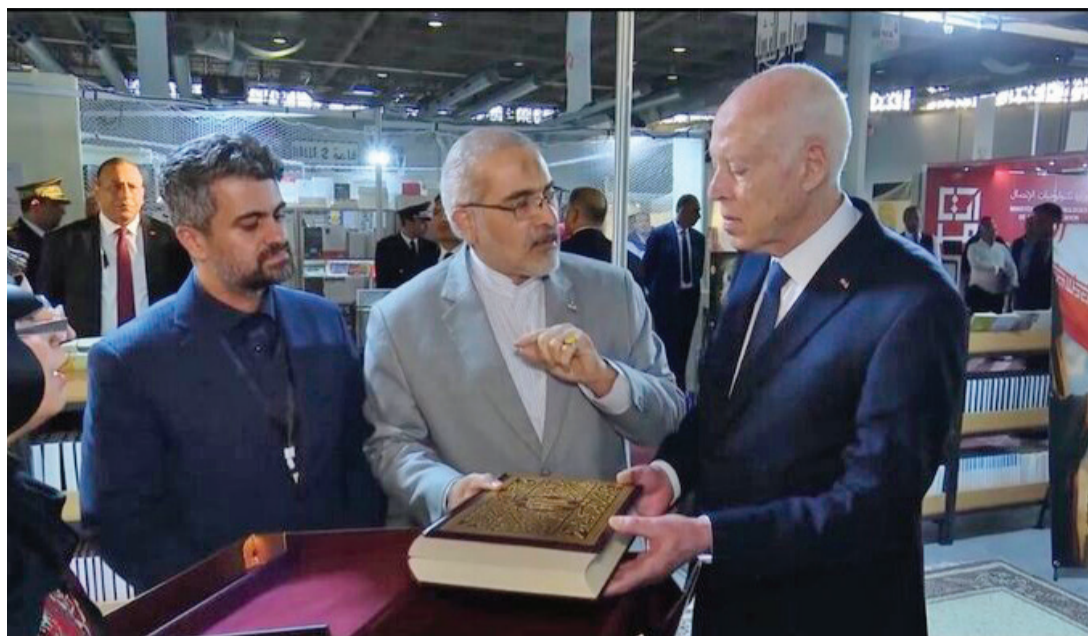
During the opening ceremony of the fair, the President of Tunisia Kais Saied visited the pavilion of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During this visit, Mir Massoud Hosseini, Iran's ambassador to Tunisia, presented the president with a printed edition of a precious Qur'an manuscript whose writing dates back to the first century AH.

The pavilion of the Islamic Republic of Iran displays symbols related to the American-Israeli military aggression against the country, especially honoring the student martyrs of the Shajareh Tayyebeh school in Minab.

The US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28 and for 40 days, they martyred about 3,500 people including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, several officials and military commanders as well as numerous civilians, including women and children.

During the 40-day war (also known as Ramadan War), be-



sides some military targets, the US and Israel launched organized attacks against civilian infrastructure, including residential homes, hospitals, refineries, power plants, schools, universities, art and cultural spaces, bookstores, museums, and ancient sites in several cities, causing total or partial damages and injuring innocent people.

On the first day of the war, the Shajareh Tayyebeh elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan Province, became the site of a devastating massacre. 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. Authorities confirmed a final death toll of 156 people.

Speaking about the fair, a representative of Nakhle Sabz Publication said: "Although the facilities and design of this exhibition cannot be compared with other Arabic book fairs and are much weaker, the reception of Iran's pavilion and the expression of solidarity by visitors with the people of Iran are very strong and noteworthy."

Under the theme "Tunisia, Homeland of Books," this edition brings together 394 publishing

houses from more than 30 countries.

President Kais Saied inaugurated the event, touring the various halls and exhibition pavilions in the presence of numerous intellectuals, thinkers, and publishing house executives.

During the presentation of this year's program, Mohamed Salah Kadri, director of the organizing committee, announced that 25 cultural activities would be held alongside the event, including 10 seminars and 15 roundtables.

Having launched on April 23, this year's edition of the Tunis International Book Fair will run until May 3.

Emilienne Malfatto's "The Colonel Does Not Sleep" published in Persian

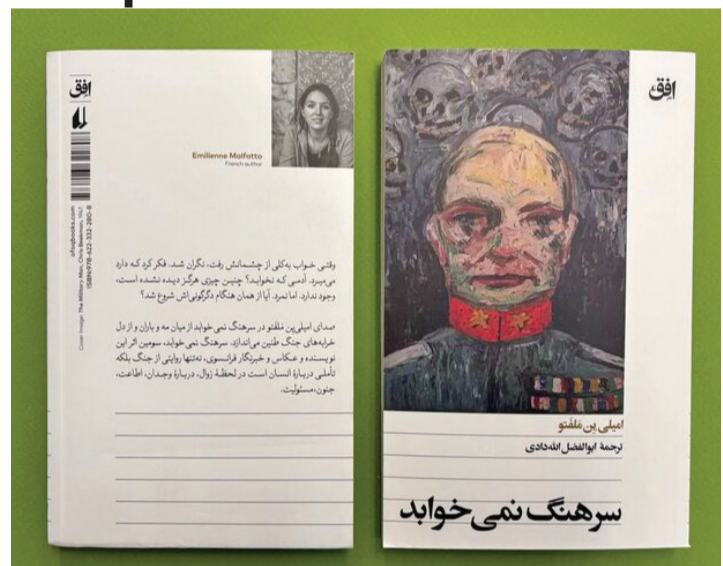
TEHRAN – The Persian translation of the novella "The Colonel Does Not Sleep" written by the French author Emilienne Malfatto has been released in the Iranian book market.

Translated by Abolfazl Allahdadi, the book has been brought out by Ofoq Publication, Mehr reported.

Originally published in 2022, "The Colonel Does Not Sleep" is Malfatto's second book, a vertiginous story about war and what it does to men. It has been translated into several languages.

In an anonymous basement in a big city of a country at war, day after day, the colonel toils away at his drudgery. He is an expert torturer, content to hide and obey orders from the Counter Conquest and from distant battles.

At night, the colonel does not sleep, plagued by his own ghosts. An army of shadows and voices, his victims have taken his



dreams hostage. The rain outside is incessant. The landscape and faces have turned to ash—a sort of waking nightmare painted in the grey hues of disillusionment. Shadows dance and three men on the road to perdition answer: the tortured torturer, the henchmen silently lie in wait, and, in

a huge palace, in the middle of a large, empty room, a general slowly turns mad.

A cruel fable about mental illness, war, and men. A powerfully written tour de force, it is elliptical, syncopated, repetitive, and melodic; it builds in a disturbing crescendo. Its treatment of the

threat of war that never becomes reality, of invisible enemies, and the vacuousness of orders is reminiscent of Buzzati's "The Tartar Steppe" and of Hubert Mingarelli's "Four Soldiers".

Emilienne Malfatto, 36, is an award-winning photographer, journalist, and writer. Through intimate stories, her work revolves around social, feminist, and post-conflict issues in the West Asia, Latin America, and Europe. Her photos have been featured in publications like The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Le Monde and exhibited internationally.

Her novel "May the Tigris Grieve for You" (2020), which won the 2021 Prix Goncourt for a debut, is about a family tragedy in Southern Iraq. Her non-fiction book "The Serpents Will Come for You" (2021) about the murder of social leaders in Colombia, won the Albert Londres book prize.

From Gaza to Paris, six artists against erasure

Six Palestinian artists, most of them evacuated from Gaza since 2024, come together at the Galerie du Jour agnès b. under a title borrowed from a poem by Donia Al-Amal, The Grain of Our Hearts.

A pomegranate disappears into the jaws of a mechanical press. Out of it flows, onto a zinc tray, a vivid red pulp whose crushed seeds still glisten in the light. The video, shown on a screen, gives the exhibition "The Grain of Our Hearts" its founding image: the fruit emblem of Palestine, pressed to its last drop, retaining its brilliance and beating heart.

The exhibition takes its title from a poem by Donia Al-Amal, a Palestinian researcher and writer hosted in France through the PAUSE program of the College de France, which welcomes artists, academics and their families threatened in war zones. In her words, war "bakes its food from the grain of our hearts."

Along the longest wall of the

gallery, two hundred and forty-three photographs of keys, set against a white background, are aligned. This installation by Taysir Batniji, the only one of the six artists to have lived in France since the 1990s, composes a long litany. Each photograph of a key ring is accompanied by a pencil-written caption.

Some of the key rings carry charms that catch in the throat. An owl set with blue rhinestones. A red plastic letter A. A pink flower. A hook in the shape of an embroidered strawberry. A red metal heart.

Further on, the unframed prints gathered in Rehaf Al-Batniji's series "There Are Not Images" appear unremarkable. Born in Gaza in 1990, the artist offers a sky streaked with clouds, a sepiaportrait, a red tomato beside a yellow water container. For her, they stand for a stay of execution. "The image you grasp in the present moment becomes, a minute later, an archive, the trace

of a moment that has just been erased," she writes.

Back inside, with the six small colleges framed in pale wood by Samaa Abu Allaban, born in 2000. Genocidal Kitchen documents the makeshift cooking arrangements under a tent: an earthen stove, handwritten notes, a gas cylinder. "If you are lucky enough to have one, you have to fill it every week, and it costs a lot."

"This work is inspired by the people of Gaza during the famine, when they tried to preserve food by every possible means. But for me, it is not only about the survival of food, it is also about the survival of their stories," the artist explains.

Dried figs sit alongside a piece of cardboard. Materials that look ordinary, but were extraordinarily precious in that context. "People burned their own books, furniture, and even their artworks just to prepare daily meals," Abu Allaban writes. In Gaza, this very work would most likely have ended

up as fuel under a cooking pot.

To leave the home is look for street. Nine linocut prints, arranged in a strict grid, show the same tangle of thick black streets, like the alleys of a Gaza neighborhood, a city "flattened from end to end." Adel Al-Taweel, born in 1995 in the Nuseirat refugee camp, turned that phrase into a coldly ironic title aimed at the Western user looking up Gaza on a mapping application: What Have Your Maps Become?

"In Gaza, roads are deleted, in Gaza, even buildings are deleted," the artist writes. The street leads to what is left of it: makeshift dwellings, and the lives that hold on within them. Amer Nasser, born in Gaza in 1991, screenwriter of the film "Once Upon a Time in Gaza", awarded at Cannes in 2025, aligns fourteen prints: a dog before a red curtain, children playing beneath a tangle of electrical cables, a boat at the port, a gutted interior.