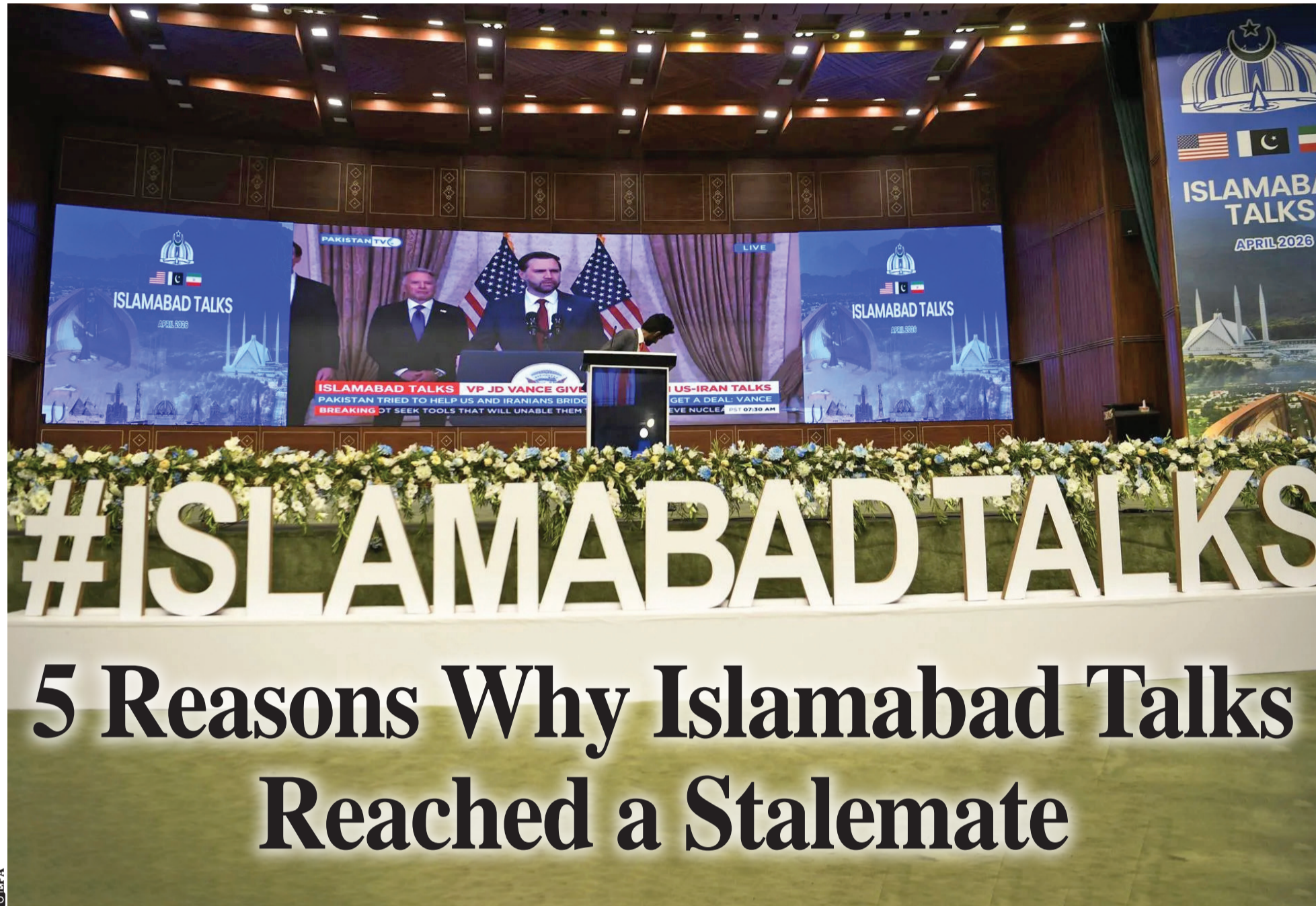


# TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 46th year | No. 15312 | Wednesday | April 29, 2026 | Ordibehesht 9, 1405 | Dhu al-Qadah 11, 1447



US Vice President JD Vance speaks to journalists as seen in a televised address before he leaves Islamabad, Pakistan, 12 April 2026.

## 5 Reasons Why Islamabad Talks Reached a Stalemate

### Former top Biden official criticizes US policy on Iran

TEHRAN— Wendy Sherman, who served as President Biden's deputy secretary of state, has stated that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "created a genocide" in Gaza, while also criticizing the US approach to Iran and the unraveling of the nuclear deal.

In an interview with Bloomberg, Sherman, who left the Biden administration in July 2023, before Israel's military campaign in Gaza began, made a rare acknowledgment of US-supported atrocities against Palestinian civilians from a former senior administration official. Despite her view, she maintained that US support for Israel remains critical.

"It is critical that Israel remains an ally of the US and we protect the right of a Jewish state," Sherman said. "I also believe that Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu] has led us down a road — and we have been part of it — that has, in essence, created a genocide in Gaza that has destabilized the Middle East." On views of her fellow Jewish Americans, Sherman responded: "I can't make the legal analysis about whether it is literally a genocide, but there is no doubt Gaza was demolished."

### Iran slams US 'maritime blockade' at UN, warns of threats to global navigation

TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, has sharply criticized the United States during a Security Council session, accusing Washington of undermining maritime security and violating international law through a "maritime blockade."

Speaking to reporters following an open debate at the United Nations Security Council on Monday, Iravani said recent US actions, including the seizure of Iranian commercial vessels in international waters, amount to "piracy and hostage-taking."

He added that such measures breach the United Nations Charter and fall under acts of aggression as defined by General Assembly Resolution 3314.

Iravani also accused Washington of using coercion and intimidation against commercial shipping, stating that vessel crews have been "terrorized" and unlawfully detained. He further criticized 'the silence of some Council members,' saying that concerns over freedom of navigation were not matched by condemnation of US actions.

### Strategic solidarity: Iran offers defense expertise to SCO members

TEHRAN — Iran's Acting Minister of Defense Brigadier General Seyyed Majid Ibn Reza has denounced the joint US-Israeli war on Iran as a "war crime" and "state terrorism".

"There's no doubt that this aggression is not only a clear violation of the ban on the use of force under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, as well as Chapter VI on the peaceful settlement of disputes, the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and other relevant legal frameworks — but it goes beyond a breach of international humanitarian law," Ibn Reza made the remarks in a message to the Meeting of Defense Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States held in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. Deputy Defense Minister Brigadier General Reza Talei-Nik, who attended the meeting, read the statement.

"It (the US-Israeli aggression) amounts to a war crime and state terrorism. On top of its devastating impact on regional peace and security, it also undermines our collective efforts to achieve lasting peace," the statement added. The acting minister also thanked the SCO for denouncing "the illegal and illegitimate aggression of the US and the Zionist regime."

► Pages 2-3

### Hidden cost of a conflict: Why a US-Israel war on Iran would shake global energy markets

TEHRAN— As tensions rise over the possibility of a coordinated US-Israeli military strike against Iran, the world's energy markets are quietly bracing for a shock that could dwarf previous oil crises.

While political rhetoric focuses on military objectives, energy experts warn that the strategic petroleum reserves of major consuming nations are dangerously inadequate to compensate for a real supply disruption. ► Page 4

### The South Lebanon death marsh, where Israeli ambitions wither

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The landscape of the confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel has undergone a seismic shift, marking the definitive end of an era. While the fragile ceasefire was initially framed as de-escalation, the reality on the ground has revealed a systematic campaign of Israeli violations that has forced the Resistance's transition into a new, more lethal doctrine.

Hezbollah has officially abandoned its policy of silence toward these breaches, a stance that previously deferred responsibility to the Lebanese government. ► Page 5

### 90 Iranian universities in THE Asia university rankings 2026

TEHRAN —The Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2026 has placed 90 Iranian universities among the top Asian institutions, up from 85 universities in 2025.

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026 judge research-intensive universities across all their core missions: teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and international outlook.

Sharif University of Technology is placed first in the country, with a global ranking of 76, Borna news agency reported.

Amirkabir university of Technology (79), Iran University of Science and Technology (87) are ranked second and third. ► Page 7

### Iran slams UNICEF for failing to denounce US-Israeli crimes against children

TEHRAN — The Iranian High Council for Human Rights has criticized UNICEF for failing to denounce the US-Israeli crimes against Iranian children during the recent aggression.

Nasser Seraj, the secretary of the High Council, has urged Catherine Russell, the executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund, to strongly and unequivocally condemn the illegal US-Israeli strikes that targeted Iranian children and organize immediate psychological, medical, and educational support for the affected kids.

"Undoubtedly, silence and inaction in the face of these crimes will weaken the credibility and status of international institutions and will be recorded in the memory of the international community," Seraj said in a letter to Russell, Press TV reported.

Meanwhile, Seraj said that during the imposed war, which began on February 28, the Zionist regime and the United States directly hit civilian targets, killing and injuring thousands of Iranian citizens, many of them children. ► Page 7

### Iran holds the stronger cards in high-stakes diplomacy

By Batool Subeiti

LONDON — The current friction between Iran and the United States has reached a diplomatic precipice. However, a full-scale military conflict remains unlikely; had the U.S. possessed the strategic will or the capacity to endure the fallout of a prolonged war, it would not have hesitated during previous escalations.

The U.S. called for a ceasefire only ten days after initiating hostilities against Iran. Had Washington been capable of sustaining the conflict, it likely would not have accepted Tehran's 10-point document as a framework for negotiations.

The objectives of the war have been exhausted, and it did not achieve the outcome it sought. ► Page 3



### Iran football delegation named "Minab-168"

TEHRAN — The Iranian football team, known as Team Melli, will compete in the 2026 FIFA World Cup under the banner of Minab-168.

This name honors the tragic incident at Minab School, where 168 students lost their lives, marking one of the most sorrowful chapters in the region's history.

A meeting of the 2026 FIFA World Cup Cultural Committee was convened to focus on introducing and promoting Iran's culture, history, and national identity to the global audience.

Iran have been drawn into Group G alongside Egypt, Belgium, and New Zealand.

## TEHRAN PAPERS

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

## US positions remain an obstacle to agreement

Sobh-e-No expresses its view on the lack of positive progress and the halt in negotiations in Islamabad: A brief look at the trajectory of Trump's war-related and negotiation-related scenarios shows that his current approach to shaping news about the talks is shifting away from the core issues and toward secondary, less constructive distractions. According to Reuters, the Iran-US talks have reached a deadlock. Despite Tehran's flexibility in the negotiation process, Washington continues to insist on its excessive demands. Donald Trump, who failed to force Iran into submission through threats and military attacks, now seeks to achieve the same goals through a naval blockade. Zero enrichment and dismantling of Iran's nuclear facilities are among the demands the US continues to push for. On Saturday, Al Arabiya, citing Iranian diplomatic officials, reported that ending US attacks and lifting the naval blockade are now among Iran's most important conditions for continuing the negotiations. At present, Trump's insistence on maintaining the naval blockade has prevented the second round of talks from taking place in Islamabad.

## Iran: The gray zone of negotiations

The Iran newspaper wrote about the challenging nature of the talks: Based on geopolitical and military logic, the United States faces significant limitations. Rising military costs, media pressure, dissatisfaction among allies, and economic consequences—such as higher energy prices—are all factors that work against Washington over time. In this situation, several scenarios are conceivable: a limited agreement or temporary ceasefire, establishing minimal de-escalation, halting clashes, a short-term conflict aimed at creating a 'symbolic victory,' a move toward a more comprehensive agreement, leading to a more sustainable outcome. What is clear is that Iran has demonstrated sufficient and long-term resilience against any form of threat. This means that increasing pressure on Iran cannot provide an effective response to reducing tensions or resolving the regional crisis.

## Arman-e-Emrooz: The battlefield and diplomacy in alignment

Abdollah Ravan-Khah, a political analyst, explained in an interview with Arman-e-Emrooz the alignment between the battlefield and diplomacy. A misunderstanding of these two arenas can create artificial gaps in policymaking. In reality, the battlefield and diplomacy are not in opposition but are extensions of one another, and each loses its full effectiveness without the other. Whenever coordination and synergy have existed be-

tween these two domains, the results have been far more effective. Conversely, any lack of coordination or excessive prioritization of one over the other can weaken national interests. Given the rapid changes in the global order, policymakers must adopt a flexible and realistic approach, adjusting the relationship between the battlefield and diplomacy to maximize the use of available capacities.

## Khorasan: A performance to regain lost popularity

Khorasan, in an analysis, referred to the assassination attempt on Trump. The paper stated that the attempt is merely a worn-out scenario aimed at restoring the Republicans' lost popularity ahead of the US midterm elections. The first goal, according to the article, is to distract public attention from the quagmire of the Iran war. The paper argues that Trump cannot leave the region after numerous false claims and the disastrous consequences of closing the Strait of Hormuz for US domestic markets. The second reason is to cover up the unclear status of the Epstein case proceedings. The third reason is Trump's experience from the previous assassination attempt. As another election approaches, the article claims he could use this incident to regain some of the popularity he lost due to the war, rising prices inside the US, and the impact of the Epstein case. The paper adds that a Republican defeat in the midterm elections could significantly pave the way for Democrats to pursue impeachment, potentially ending Trump's second term before reaching its midpoint.

## Jam-e-Jam: Iran's membership as a vice president of the NPT Review Conference

Jam-e-Jam, in a commentary, discussed the convening of the Nuclear Disarmament Review Conference and the election of the Islamic Republic of Iran as one of its vice presidents. According to the paper, despite extensive efforts by Western countries led by the United States, as well as Arab states of the Persian Gulf, to block Iran's selection, the Islamic Republic succeeded in joining the NPT Review Conference. Iran's presence, the article argues, not only carries diplomatic significance but also reflects the country's active role in discussions on nuclear disarmament and its opposition to selective and discriminatory approaches in this field. The paper notes that Iran has consistently emphasized in international forums the need for complete, verifiable, and irreversible nuclear disarmament, while also asserting the undeniable right of all nations to the peaceful use of nuclear energy as a fundamental principle of international law.

## Army: Iranian Air Force struck 'enemy' bases at start of US-Israel war on Iran

TEHRAN - A spokesperson for Iran's Army said on Tuesday that Iranian fighter jets carried out strikes against "enemy" positions in the region at the outset of the joint US-Israel war that began in late February.

"At the start of the war, our Air Force carried out several sorties, striking enemy bases in regional countries — including the counter-revolution base in Erbil, Iraq, as well as targets in Kuwait and Qatar," Brigadier General Mohammad Akrami-Nia said on Tuesday, according to IRNA news agency.

Last week, NBC News reported that an Iranian F-5 fighter jet bombed Camp Buehring in Kuwait at the beginning of the war. Citing two officials, the report described the incident as "the first time an enemy fixed-wing aircraft has struck an American military base in years."

The aircraft reportedly penetrated layered American air defenses despite the presence of Patriot missile batteries, short-range interceptors, advanced radar coverage, and persistent regional surveillance networks.

The NBC report also said Iran carried out strikes against more than 100 targets across 11 US bases in the region.

The report has seriously challenged claims by the administration of President Donald Trump that the United States had destroyed



Iran's military capabilities.

Such developments are reshaping perceptions of American military dominance and exposing vulnerabilities across Persian Gulf bases.

The United States and Israel launched the war on Iran on February 28. During 39 days of fighting, which led to a two-week ceasefire beginning on April 8, Iran's military and civilian infrastructure — including residential areas — was bombed, claiming the lives of thousands of people.

In response, Iran struck Israeli targets as well as US bases in Persian Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Kuwait.

## Strategic solidarity: Iran offers defense expertise to SCO members

From page 1 ▶ The US and Israel launched the war on February 28. Tehran and Washington reached a two-week ceasefire on April 8. President Donald Trump unilaterally extended the truce hours before its expiration.

It is widely believed that Iran's strong military response to the aggression forced Trump to accept the ceasefire. During the 39-day war, Iran carried out retaliatory strikes against US bases in the Persian Gulf region and also against Israel.

The US media has recently revealed that the extent of damage suffered by the US military at the hands of Iranian armed forces is far beyond the narratives of the Trump administration.

In his meetings in Bishkek, Talaei-Nik, who is also the spokesperson for Iran's Ministry of Defense, expressed Iran's readiness to share its defensive weapons capabilities with "independent countries, especially SCO members."

"We are ready to share the



experiences of America's defeat with other members of the organization," Talaei-Nik said.

Furthermore, Talaei-Nik said the resistance and resilience of Iranians during the war forced the US to "abandon its illegal and irrational demands." He noted that "The United States is no longer in a position to dictate its policies to independent nations."

The Iranian deputy defense minister also met with Russian Defense Minister Andrei Bel-

ousov, who said Moscow and Iran would continue to support each other "under any circumstances." The Russian defense minister added that his country will continue its support for Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Last week, Talaei-Nik highlighted Iran's success in indigenizing its military capabilities. He said the country's weapons production capacity is the result of more than two decades of investment in its defense industry. He noted that a significant por-

tion of Iran's missile capability remains unused in the face of its retaliatory strikes against US regional bases and Israel.

## Iran's strategic integration into the SCO

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a powerful Eurasian political, economic, and security alliance. After years of holding observer status, Iran officially became a full member on July 4, 2023, marking a historic shift in its foreign policy.

This membership is the cornerstone of Tehran's "Look to the East" strategy, which prioritizes building deep-rooted ties with non-Western powers. By participating as a full member, Iran aims to neutralize the impact of Western economic sanctions and integrate into a new multipolar security architecture. This partnership allows Iran to share intelligence, conduct joint military exercises, and collaborate on regional stability, effectively creating a strategic buffer against US-led geopolitical pressure in the region.

## Former top Biden official criticizes US policy on Iran

From page 1 ▶ She added: "I am a strong supporter of Israel and the right of a Jewish state, but I am not a supporter of destroying any civilization, or any people — that goes for the Palestinians or the Iranian people."

Sherman led negotiations with Iran during the Obama administration, which culminated in the 2015 signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal.

However, President Trump tore up the deal in 2018, a move that led Iran to increase its enrichment levels. The current Trump administration has since used Iran's advanced nuclear work in its attempts to justify attacking the country.

Sherman told Bloomberg that



the United States has "not dealt with the Middle East in a way that's helped create stability and peace."

"Obviously, the Iraq war was a disaster. Then, Obama tried to deal with Iran, which was undone by Trump. Could the Biden administration have done more? I'm sure we could have. Every administration, in hindsight, could have done more," she said.

## Iran vows parallel paths of 'war' and 'diplomacy'

TEHRAN — Iran's government is simultaneously pursuing two complementary and high-stakes strategies, supporting battlefronts while actively engaging in diplomacy, as the Islamic Republic braces for continued confrontation with the United States and its allies, the country's government spokesperson said on Tuesday.

In a weekly press conference held at the Tarasht Power Plant Operation Company in Tehran, Fatemeh Mohajerani laid out a dual-track approach that she said reflects the administration's response to an enemy "cognitive war" aimed at destabilizing Iranian society through contradictory news and social media disinformation.

"The antidote to this plot is vigilance against rumors and reliance on national cohesion," Mohajerani told reporters, adding that unprecedented unity among Iran's political and military leadership had thwarted enemy objectives.

The spokesperson also sharp-

ly criticized the United States, accusing Washington of "piracy and naval hostage-taking," a reference to the seizure of Iranian commercial vessels in international waters.

Mohajerani said the Iranian government had anticipated such actions by the current US administration and had taken measures to mitigate their impact. She added that Tehran's main strategy remains making maximum use of the country's strategic geographic location and pursuing a policy of "good neighborliness."

Dismissing claims made by President Donald Trump, Mohajerani urged Iranians not to heed 'enemy rhetoric and unofficial news,' which she said were aimed solely at creating division and diverting public opinion.

Emphasizing the need for national cohesion, Mohajerani described the disruption of Iran's internal space as a key tool of an "imposed war." She argued that existing unity among different segments of society,

## Iran slams US 'maritime blockade' at UN, warns of threats to global navigation

From page 1 ▶ The Iranian envoy linked the tensions to an ongoing "war of aggression" launched by the United States and Israel since late February, warning that such developments have destabilized key waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz—a critical corridor for global energy supplies.

Defending Tehran's own actions, Iravani said Iran remains committed to maintaining maritime security in the Persian Gulf and surrounding waters. He stressed that any measures taken by Iran in the Strait of Hormuz are consistent with its rights as a coastal state and are designed to balance security concerns with the safe passage of international shipping.

"Iran's approach is rooted in international law and national regulations, aimed at ensuring stability



in a highly volatile environment," he said, adding that policies would be adjusted in response to evolving conditions. Iravani also noted that Iran is not a signatory to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, though it recognizes provisions that constitute customary international law.

He concluded by placing responsibility for any disruption to maritime transport on "the aggressors," namely the United States and its allies, dismissing alternative narratives as unfounded.



including political leaders and defense forces, renders enemy goals futile.

"This unanimity shows we are one nation, with one flag, one Leader, and one path for the dignity of the Islamic Republic of Iran," she said.

As Iran navigates both active battlefronts and diplomatic channels, the government's message remains one of resilience: that the country will neither abandon its defenses nor close the door to negotiation, a balancing act that will define the coming months in one of the world's most volatile regions.

Addressing domestic concerns, Mohajerani confirmed that Iran has taken "all necessary measures" and coordinated with Saudi authorities to ensure the safety of Iranian pilgrims participating in this year's Hajj, the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca.

She said relevant officials had prepared to dispatch pilgrims under established procedures, and that President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration is making every effort to ensure a dignified Hajj for Iranians in accordance with required standards.

## Former British diplomat: War with Iran is a global war against a corrupt financial architecture

TEHRAN - Former British diplomat and leading geopolitical analyst Alastair Crooke warned that the ongoing war with Iran is not a conventional military conflict but a global war against a corrupt financial architecture that has long suppressed the real economy in favor of Wall Street speculation.

In a recent assessment of the escalating crisis, Crooke dismissed Donald Trump's rhetoric against Iran as a dangerous delusion, arguing that the US administration's illegal "war of choice" is systematically dismantling the global economy and plunging the West into a state of "dire pain."

Crooke stated that Trump's claims of total leverage are empty and disconnected from strategic reality. "Trump keeps saying he has all the cards, but listen to our cards," he said. "One is Hormuz. Iran controls Hormuz, and we'll continue. They are able to control Bab al-Mandab in the Red Sea, and they can control pipelines. This is why I keep saying Iran's aim in this war is to break the whole paradigm." He further criticized the West's inability to grasp shifting global perspectives: "They're completely incapable of seeing that others have different ways of thinking and seeing reality from a different perspective. They can't

understand that. I don't see a path to a solution."

Crooke warned that while the west currently exists in a "neverworld" where the full impact has not yet hit, the consequences will soon be felt in every household. "We in the West are going to feel the consequences directly. There won't be petrol in the petrol stations or gasoline in the gas stations. There will be difficulty getting your children to school. There will not be the food that you want."

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

# Five reasons why Islamabad talks reached a stalemate

By staff writer

TEHRAN - The stalled negotiations between Iran and the United States remain at the forefront of global geopolitics, following Pakistan-mediated talks in Islamabad earlier this month that concluded without a breakthrough.

While Pakistan has intensified its diplomatic efforts to facilitate a second round of dialogue, progress remains elusive. Tehran maintains that the primary obstacle is Washington's "excessive, unrealistic and unacceptable" approach, which fails to recognize the new realities on the ground.

The Islamabad meeting on April 11 occurred just days after a two-week ceasefire intended to halt the joint US-Israeli aggression that began on February 28. Although the truce was initiated after President Donald Trump initially accepted Iran's comprehensive 10-point plan, he subsequently reneged on the agreement, imposing a naval blockade on Iranian ports. In a decisive display of sovereignty, Iran—which has maintained full control of the Strait of Hormuz since the conflict's outset—closed the strategic waterway to all vessels affiliated with its adversaries.

The failure of the Islamabad talks can be attributed to five critical pillars of American intransigence:

**The illegal naval blockade:** The US naval blockade is not merely a provocation but a flagrant violation of international law. President Trump's enforcement of this measure contradicts the fundamental principle of the "freedom of the seas" enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). By attempting to choke Iran's economy after a ceasefire agreement,



Washington has demonstrated a bad-faith approach to diplomacy. Tehran rightly views this blockade as an act of war, justifying its defensive closure of the Strait of Hormuz to protect its national security.

**The inalienable right to enrichment:** Washington continues to demand that Iran cease all uranium enrichment on its own soil. This demand ignores Iran's legal rights as a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Article IV of the NPT explicitly guarantees the "inalienable right" of all parties to develop research, production, and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Iran's insistence on domestic enrichment is a matter of scientific sovereignty that cannot be bargained away.

**Sovereign control of stockpiles:** The US insists that Iran's stockpile of 60-percent enriched uranium—currently estimated at several hundred kilograms—must be removed from the country. Iran has firmly rejected this infringement on its territorial assets. From Tehran's perspective, these materials are a testament to its indigenous technological prowess and serve as a vital guarantee against further

Western "flip-flopping" on signed agreements.

**A legacy of systematic mistrust:** Iran's mistrust of Washington is rooted in recent history and the latest aggression. The US launched a war against Iran in June 2025 and again this year, even while the two sides were ostensibly engaged in negotiations. Furthermore, the US military buildup continues unabated with the deployment of a third aircraft carrier, the USS George H.W. Bush, to the region. Trump's intensified war rhetoric further proves that Washington prefers bullying over genuine diplomacy.

**Netanyahu's influence and domestic distractions:** It is widely understood that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been a primary architect of this conflict, egging on the Trump administration to avoid his own political demise. By fueling regional instability, Netanyahu seeks to divert attention from his financial corruption trials and the significant military blows Israel has suffered at the hands of Iranian forces and the regional resistance. Escalation serves as a shield to help him evade accountability for the security failures of October 7.

The reality of the severe blows

In response to the joint US-Israeli aggression, Iranian armed forces carried out 100 waves of missile and drone strikes against American bases in the Persian Gulf region and strategic sites in Israel during 39 days of war. The Trump administration has tried to play down the blows that the American military has received from Iranian retaliatory strikes. Despite the White House narrative, reports from the New York Times and NBC News suggest that Iran has delivered severe blows to the US military in the Persian Gulf. These admissions indicate that the Trump administration's claims of neutralizing Iran's military capabilities ring hollow.

Tehran remains open to talks, but only on the condition of mutual respect and the lifting of "pressure, threats, and blockades." Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's recent diplomatic tour to Pakistan, Oman, and Russia underscores this position. Following his meeting with President Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg, Araghchi emphasized that Iran's "red lines" are non-negotiable.

Even German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has acknowledged the shift in the balance of power, noting the lack of a clear American exit strategy. Merz observed that the Iranians are "obviously negotiating very skillfully" and are "clearly stronger than one thought."

Ultimately, Iran's military success and pragmatic diplomacy have forced the US to the table. As the wise and pragmatic actor in this theater, Iran has checked the Trump administration's ambitions, proving that the era of unilateral dictates in the West Asia region has come to an end.

## Iran holds the stronger cards in high-stakes diplomacy

From Page 1 ▶ from overthrowing the Iranian government as a first option, to eliminating its capabilities as a second option, to creating unrest, chaos, the entry of militias, and the fragmentation of the country. In fact, the opposite occurred, as an additional card was added: the Strait of Hormuz card, which has become the strongest negotiating tool for Iran.

The current situation is in a diplomatic phase in which Iran holds more control than the United States. The U.S. naval blockade against Iran is very costly and cannot be sustained for long, especially without secure maritime access to its bases in the Persian Gulf. The fate of these bases has become uncertain, as they have proven ineffective and costly, and have become more of a leverage point in Iran's hands than a tool against it.

Iran has refused to resume negotiations until the U.S. naval blockade is lifted under a mutually

acceptable settlement regarding navigation in the Iranian-controlled Strait of Hormuz. Subsequent stages would involve the inclusion of regional allies in potential agreements, followed by negotiations on nuclear issues. This would encompass enrichment limits and the fate of the 60% enriched stockpile, specifically its dilution under the supervision of the IAEA.

Therefore, this is a phase of intense diplomacy, with Iran holding the upper hand. This became clearly evident in President Trump's handling after the first two-week ceasefire, as Iran refused to engage in talks unless the blockade was lifted. Initially, they were prepared, mentioning sending JD Vance, then discussing Kushner and Witkoff, on the basis that Abbas Araghchi was leading the round, but Iran rejected this unless the blockade was lifted. This is because Iran does not want negotiations to focus on preliminary issues rather than core matters.

The core issues include arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz, compensation to Iran, inclusion of allies in agreements, and the nuclear file. Iranian diplomacy is moving in several directions. This includes securing international backing from Russia and reaching an understanding with Oman, a coastal state, since Oman and Iran are the two countries directly responsible for regulating passage.

Iran has effectively entrusted this matter to Oman as a friendly and non-hostile state, even though Oman was not originally expected to have any role in controlling passage through the Strait of Hormuz. This is aimed at establishing safe navigation once and for all by placing control in the hands of the coastal states, and ensuring safe passage for non-hostile powers that do not use transit as a means of aggression.

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

## LATES NEWS

humanitarian cooperation and visit medical sites damaged in the ongoing US-Israeli war of aggression.

■ **Iran expected to submit amended proposal to Pakistan, CNN claims**

Citing sources, CNN claimed that Iran is expected to present an amended proposal to Pakistani mediators within the next few days.

■ **Tehran-Moscow flights resume after two-month halt**

The first flights between Tehran and Moscow resumed on Tuesday after a two-month suspension caused by the US-Israeli military aggression.

■ **World Bank: Attacks on infrastructure and Hormuz disruptions created largest oil shock**

The World Bank has announced that attacks on energy infrastructure and shipping disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have created the largest oil supply shock in history.

The institution warned that the ongoing crisis poses a severe threat to global energy markets and economic stability.

■ **Iran MP: 'This is the final war,' we will fight to secure national stability for years**

The spokesperson for the Iranian parliament's national security commission, Ebra-

him Rezaei, declared that the ongoing conflict is "the final war," stating that Iran will fight in a manner that ensures its national security is guaranteed for years to come.

"Even if all the armed forces of the world gathered, they would not be able to take control of the Strait of Hormuz from Iran. We have prepared ourselves for a long-term war and have many surprises for the enemy," added the spokesperson.

■ **WSJ: Ship traffic through Strait of Hormuz hits lowest level**

The Wall Street Journal reports that ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has fallen to its lowest level since the Persian Gulf War, following US sanctions and Iranian attacks.

■ **Report: US fell into Israeli trap in Iran war**

A Middle East Eye exposé reveals that the US fell into an Israeli trap in the current war on Iran, according to analysts.

The same corrupt intelligence pipeline used to justify the Iraq invasion was retooled to convince President Trump he could defeat Iran in days.

Israeli officials reportedly promised the Iranian government could be toppled in just four days.

## SPORTS

### OCA lauds Iranian shot putter Hassan Ajami

TEHRAN - Sometimes, a contest trundling along expected lines only needs one athlete to play out of their skin, injecting wild, raw passion into every throw.

That is exactly what ignited the men's shot put at the Asian Beach Games on Sunday.

China's Zhang Haochen held an early lead with 19.60m, followed closely by teammate Chen Chengyu at 19.58m and Iran's Hassan at 19.54m. With the rest of the field trailing below the 19m mark, a Chinese one-two finish seemed certain.

Iran's Hassan Ajami Bakhtiarvand, however, had other plans. Constantly pacing and muttering to himself, he went ballistic on his fourth attempt with 19.59m, agonizingly short of Zhang's lead. After Hassan and Chen fouled their fifth attempts and Zhang managed only 19.52m, the podium was decided in a dramatic final round.

Hassan stepped up first and, with a roar, sent the iron ball soaring to 20.17m; the 20m barrier had been breached on the beach. Chen followed with a strong 19.95m to claim second. Finally, Zhang, who had led nearly the entire afternoon, improved to 19.69m but it was only enough for bronze.

In a stunning shift, the Chinese favorites slipped from gold to third place.

An emotional Hassan celebrated with tears in his eyes. During a period of national upheaval, he provided Iran with a rare moment of pure joy.

"It was difficult at first," Ajami admitted. "But I hung in there. I wanted the gold. This is for my country, my father and my mother."

This victory - marked by a personal best of 20.17m - serves as a massive boost as Hassan prepares for the Asian Games.

The gap between the leaders and the field was vast. Uzbekistan's Doston Rajabov finished a distant fourth with 18.39m.

Success on sand typically favors throwers with exceptional upper-body speed and balance. Hassan's victory was built on a consistent anchor foot that prevented sliding and fouls, allowing him to transfer momentum from his legs despite the soft surface.

China's Chen was remarkably consistent, utilizing a high release angle for his 19.95m silver-medal throw. Zhang, meanwhile, relied on raw strength over rotational momentum. His direct throwing style allowed him to reach a high percentage of his potential with only one foul. However, he leaves disappointed on two counts: losing the gold and falling short of his 20.30m personal best set in 2025.

Source: oca.asia

### Iran basketball commentator Atashi dies

TEHRAN - The Iranian basketball community mourns the loss of veteran commentator Enayatollah Atashi.

He passed away Tuesday in Tehran's Jam Hospital at the age of 81 after a long battle with cancer.

Atashi, a familiar voice on television for over five decades, will be laid to rest at Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery on Wednesday.

The Tehran Times extends its deepest condolences to his family.

### Iran's beach handball into final: 2026 Sanya

TEHRAN - Iran's national men's beach handball team secured their spot in the final of the 2026 Sanya Asian Beach Games on Tuesday after defeating Thailand.

The first set saw Iran triumph with a score of 19-16. Thailand fought back in the second set, winning 18-16. The match was ultimately decided by a shootout, where Iran emerged victorious

and booked their place in the championship final.

This victory marked their sixth consecutive win of the tournament.

Throughout the group stage, Iran showcased their strength with victories against the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Bahrain, and China.

The Iranian team are now set to face the winner of Qatar and Oman in the final match slated for Wednesday.

### Angola and North Macedonia cancel matches against Iran

TEHRAN - The football federations of North Macedonia and Angola have officially canceled their friendly matches against Iran.

Iran's national team are scheduled to leave for Turkey on May 12th to commence their World Cup 2026 preparation camp, where they planned to play friendly matches against domestic clubs as well as national teams.

One of these matches was against North Macedonia. Despite previous agreements and an official statement from the football federation confirming the match, North Macedonia decided to cancel the friendly.

Additionally, Angola, which was set to be Iran's opponents in the U.S. as part of the pre-World Cup preparations, also canceled their fixture.

The Iranian Football Federation is currently working to find replacement teams to ensure the team's training and preparation schedule remains on track.

Team Melli are drawn in Group G along with Egypt, Belgium and New Zealand.

### snooker star Vafaei determined to 'fight for my people' at World Championship

TEHRAN - Iranian snooker player Hossein Vafaei has advanced to the World Championship quarter-finals, overcoming world number one Judd Trump in an emotion-charged run he hopes will bring solace to his nation.

Vafaei, the world number 32 and nicknamed the «Prince of Persia», revealed he has been «all over the place» mentally in recent months due to the ongoing Iran war, which led him to question his participation in tournaments.

Despite these struggles, he opted to «fight for my people», successfully navigating qualifying rounds to reach the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield. There, he delivered a significant upset in the first round, thrashing former semi-finalist Si Jiahui 10-3.

His journey continued on Monday with perhaps the most significant victory of his career, maintaining composure in a tense final-frame decider to defeat Trump 13-12 and secure his first-ever quarter-final berth.

Reflecting on his mixed emotions, Vafaei stated: «I don't know (whether) to be happy. I don't know (whether) to be sad. I don't know what to do. It's just, this is the only thing I can do. With my cue, I can do something for them to make them happy at least. To show that the Iran flag is there... and you still can't raise it.»

The snooker star admitted that concerns for his family's safety during the conflict have made it difficult to focus on the game.

«I was getting sometimes sad, with what's happening,» he explained. «And I don't want to open up, but yes, I decided to fight, fight for my people, and all the Iranians all over the world. And hopefully I can make them happy.»

When asked about representing a cause beyond sport, Vafaei emphasized the sincerity of his actions: «I am not thinking about all this. Everything I am doing is from the bottom of my heart. There are lots of things going on (in Iran). Even if I win the trophy, it's nothing.»

Vafaei is set to face China's Wu Yize in the quarter-finals, which commence on Tuesday.

## Capital, facilities should be directed toward production: minister

TEHRAN- The Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade, emphasizing that capital and facilities must be directed toward production, stated that industrial and production units need liquidity to revive and sustain their production lines.

According to a report by IRNA from the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade, Seyyed Mohammad Atabak said in a meeting with members of the Economic Committee of the Islamic Consultative Assembly: "The priority of this ministry is to support small and medium-sized units, and these units are the driving engine of employment in the country."

Referring to a package to support industries, he emphasized: "Prioritization of industries has been carried out based on national necessities, and the allocation of credits is also based on this."

The Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade added: "These facilities must be used to keep the wheels of production turning. Therefore, a change in approach to liquidity management and credit distribution must be considered so that the industrial sector can secure raw materials for production."

Stating that without injecting large-scale liquidity and fundamentally solving the problems of the industrial sector, production units will face difficulties, he clarified: "In this regard, we need the cooperation of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and relevant institutions, including the Central Bank."

Atabak emphasized facilitating the clearance of goods and reminded: "We are pursuing the demands of the private sector in the economic committee of the Central Bank to accelerate clearance by removing obstacles."

### Revival of maritime industries with focus of IDRO

Referring to the revival of maritime transport by the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), he emphasized: "Investments for repairs and reconstruction of ocean-going ships and marine vessels are vital. These infrastructures must be revived by injecting special credits into the Maritime Industries Development Fund with IDRO as the focal point."

The Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade announced the supply of steel sheets by Mobarakeh Steel Company and added: "This company is responsible for supplying steel sheets to downstream and affiliated companies through imports at the approved price of the Organization for Protection of Consumers and Producers. Issuing this permit to Mobarakeh Steel supports production and preserves employment in related industries. Of course, alongside imports, we are also pursuing increasing domestic steel production capacity."

He referred to the efforts made by the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade to regulate the market under wartime conditions and continued: "The status of goods in the market and price control are reviewed weekly with the presence of deputies and the participation of trade and business guild chambers."

Atabak also expressed hope that with jihadi management, serious coordination and cooperation among institutions, and interaction with the private sector, calm will continue to prevail in the market.

On April 19, the Deputy Secretary of the Tehran Provincial Council for Dialogue between Government and the Private Sector has announced an examination of the challenges and crises caused by the war in the trade sector, aiming to expedite the processes of order registration and import of essential goods.

According to IRNA from the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Hooman Hajipour, referring to a joint meeting attended by the head of the Trade Promotion Organization, as well as Mohammad-Reza Ghafrollahi (head of the Trade Facilitation and Development Committee) and Ahmad-Reza Farshchian (member of the Tehran Chamber's Board of Representatives and head of the Import Committee of the Iran Chamber), stated that 10 proposals and solutions have been put forward to accelerate the supply of goods and provide access to raw materials for production units.

Hajipour explained that "facilitating trade processes through interaction with state in-



stitutions and via the Government-Private Sector Dialogue Council is being pursued," adding that during the meeting with the head of the Trade Promotion Organization, trade barriers and import-export challenges—especially under current conditions, as the country has endured a 40-day war—were reviewed.

According to Hajipour, it was agreed in the meeting to reduce unnecessary administrative processes and review certain systems. Responsibility for some of these trade systems lies with the Trade Promotion Organization, while others fall under the currency working group of the Central Bank.

Hajipour noted that in the current situation, it is necessary to change the origin, destination, and entry customs points in some cases, and these changes require system updates.

He added that based on negotiations with the managers of the Trade Promotion Organization, it was decided that for the import of essential industrial goods, the origin, destination, and entry customs point can be edited without requiring approval, system waiting periods, or currency optimization reviews.

According to the Deputy Secretary of the Tehran Provincial Council for Dialogue between Government and the Private Sector, outstanding order registrations from the past Iranian year 1404 (ended on March 20) for importers—especially those who achieved a certain percentage of customs clearance last year—will be exempt from systemic quota restrictions and currency optimization limits.

Hajipour also announced the extension of order registrations until May 30, 2026, and stated that for order registrations from the year 1404 that achieved 90% customs clearance, efforts have been made to allow the remaining 10% to be cleared against a letter of guarantee, considering the wartime situation and related issues.

He stated that under the current circumstances, the priority right for registering orders for 2,800 essential industrial goods will be removed, and the waiting time in the currency allocation queue will be added to the validity period of the order registration.

He emphasized that given the necessity of securing goods and boosting exports, if importers of the 2,800 essential industrial goods use foreign currency obtained from their own or others' exports, they will be taken out of the currency allocation queue. This also applies to order registrations that have already expired.

Hajipour further said that it was also agreed that the 2,800 essential industrial goods, if available in customs warehouses, would be removed from the order registration queue. Furthermore, if these goods are covered by the annual quota, they will be placed in the customs clearance queue; otherwise, they will be cleared through import without currency transfer.

Highlighting the importance of securing raw materials for production units, he said that reviewing the quotas of production units was another topic discussed in the meeting with the head of the Trade Promotion Organization. Due to the damage inflicted on certain industries—including steel and petrochemicals—during the recent war, it is essential to secure raw materials for production units that were previously produced domestically through imports. Therefore, it is necessary to seriously review the quotas of production units and take this consideration into account when determining the currency needs of production units.

Meanwhile, in a joint meeting between the Ministry of Agriculture and regulatory bodies as well as private sector associations, on April 16, issues related to the supply chain of essential goods were reviewed.

## Hidden cost of a conflict: Why a US-Israel war on Iran would shake global energy markets

TEHRAN- As tensions rise over the possibility of a coordinated US-Israeli military strike against Iran, the world's energy markets are quietly bracing for a shock that could dwarf previous oil crises.

While political rhetoric focuses on military objectives, energy experts warn that the strategic petroleum reserves of major consuming nations are dangerously inadequate to compensate for a real supply disruption.

According to experts, even after the United States released part of its strategic reserves, it became painfully clear that global stockpiles are finite and depleting rapidly. The market has already sensed the looming shortage.

More alarming is the vulnera-



bility of Persian Gulf producers, who have already lost a substantial share of their output. If wells are forced to shut due to conflict, restarting them is neither quick nor simple, production losses could persist for months.

The best-case scenario, the

swift reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and the lifting of a naval blockade, would still result in a daily loss of three million barrels, or 15 percent of regional output. That explains why oil futures are climbing even without a shot being fired. Should the blockade

intensify and extend to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, crude could surpass \$150 per barrel in the near future.

Even if the strait were reopened tomorrow, analysts at Bloomberg warn that the "oil disaster" would last at least two months.

Returning to pre-conflict production levels depends on well type, equipment damage, and local conditions, some nations may recover in two months, others in five.

A US-Israel war on Iran is not merely a geopolitical flashpoint; it is a direct threat to global energy stability. Policymakers must recognize that military action carries an economic time bomb—one that no strategic reserve can defuse.

## Deadlock in Iran war continues; Goldman Sachs raises its oil price forecast



TEHRAN- Citing the deadlock in the West Asia war and negotiations between Washington and Tehran, Goldman Sachs has raised its oil price forecast.

According to a Monday evening report by IRNA from The Guardian, the American multinational bank now predicts that Brent North Sea crude oil will trade at around \$90 per barrel in the final quarter of this year. Previously, that figure was estimated at about \$80.

Additionally, according to the bank's analysts, U.S. crude oil

(West Texas Intermediate) is expected to average \$83 between October and December — a significant increase from the previous forecast of \$75.

Goldman Sachs cited reduced production in the Persian Gulf region as the reason for this upward revision, stating: "We now assume that Gulf exports will return to normal by the end of June, and that production recovery in the Persian Gulf will be slower. Due to upside risks to oil prices, high refined product prices, the risk of product shortages,

and the unprecedented scale of this shock, the economic risks are greater than our base case scenario."

Goldman Sachs analysts estimate that 14.5 million barrels per day of Persian Gulf oil production have been lost, causing global oil inventories to decline by an unprecedented 11 to 12 million barrels per day.

Noting that higher oil prices will lead to demand destruction, they added: "Given the spike in refined product prices, we believe global oil demand in the second quarter of 2026 will fall by 1.7 million barrels per day year-on-year, and by 0.1 million barrels per day overall during 2026. Since sharp inventory declines are not sustainable, if the supply shock persists, demand destruction could become even more severe."

Goldman Sachs also warns that the risks to its forecasts are skewed to the upside. The bank presents three scenarios for fu-

ture oil prices:

- Unfavorable scenario: Assuming Persian Gulf exports return to normal by the end of July, Brent will average slightly above \$100 in the fourth quarter of 2026.

- Very unfavorable scenario: If Persian Gulf exports return to normal by the end of July, but with a permanent capacity reduction of 2.5 million barrels per day, Brent will average near \$120 in Q4 2026. This 2.5 million bpd reduction is equivalent to Hormuz Strait flows not recovering above 70%.

- Favorable scenario: If Persian Gulf exports return to normal by mid-June, with no capacity reduction, and assuming stronger supply from the U.S. and major OPEC countries, Brent will average slightly below \$80 in Q4 2026.

Earlier this month, following the announcement of a ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran, Goldman Sachs had lowered its oil price forecast.

## Mobarakeh Steel conducts its first post-war offering

TEHRAN-The first offering of hot-rolled coil by Mobarakeh Steel in the year 1405 (started on March 21), despite a high volume of 160,000 tons, faced weak demand, and ultimately a significant portion was traded at the base price.

According to Mehr News Agency, the first offering of Mobarakeh Steel's hot-rolled coil in 1405, following a pause caused by the 39-day war, came with meaningful signals about the real state of the steel market and downstream industries — an offering that not only led to an adjustment of price expectations but also narrowed the gap between exchange rates and the free market.

According to IRIB (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting), during trading on Tuesday, Ordibehesht 7 (April 27, 2026), Mobarakeh Steel Company of Isfahan offered 160,050 tons of hot-rolled coil (HR) on the physical floor of the Commodity Exchange. However, registered demand for this product was limited to 97,790 tons, and ultimately only 92,510 tons of this offering were traded without price competition at the base rate of 85,000 tomans per kilogram. The sales terms were set as 60% cash and 40% credit — a model

intended to stimulate demand but unable to fully overcome the market's recession.

This is while, prior to this offering, hot-rolled coil was being traded in the free market by intermediaries and speculators at rates as high as 130,000 to even 150,000 tomans. With the news of the offering on the Commodity Exchange, free market prices fell significantly — dropping more than 15,000 tomans — retreating to the price range below 100,000 tomans; a clear sign of the impact of official offerings in curbing emotional and unrealistic prices.

Experts attribute the weak demand in this offering to a set of structural factors, including deep recession in downstream industries, liquidity shortages in production units, and an uncertain economic environment that has led real buyers to postpone their purchases. Under such conditions, even offering part of the sales on credit has not been able to provide sufficient stimulus to increase demand.

In this regard, Davood Azershab, head of the Physical Market Analysis Department of the Commodity Exchange, referring to the previous market situation, stated: "Following

recent developments, concerns had arisen about the supply of steel coil in the country, which led to a significant rise in prices outside the exchange. However, Mobarakeh Steel's extensive offering of hot-rolled coil, accompanied by the support of policy-making institutions, was able to reduce some of these concerns and help restore calm to the market."

He said: "This interactive approach between major producers and decision-making bodies should continue so that, through the continuous supply of raw materials for downstream industries, damage to the production sector and increased economic pressure on consumers can be prevented."

Overall, the first major offering of hot-rolled coil this year can be seen as the starting point of price correction in the steel market — a path whose continuation depends, more than anything else, on the return of real demand from consuming industries and improvement in overall economic conditions. Until then, it seems that downward pressure on prices will continue, and the market will remain on a path of gradual adjustment.

## 'Iran's commercial ties to gain more weight in global structure after war'

TEHRAN- The commercial deputy of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization stated that after this war, countries will pay more attention to global trade-economic linkages, value chains, and international corridors, and it is predicted that Iran's trade will also gain more weight in the design of global linkage structures.

According to IRNA, Seyed Mohammad Sadegh Ghannadzadeh said on Monday, noting that a major part of this war is an economic war: "The main objectives of this war have largely been

economic, aimed at destroying national solidarity, and it has not succeeded. Now, the fields of economy, production, and trade are no longer merely economic issues—they have become political, security, and social issues as well. The focus remains on the economy, continuing through naval blockades and pressure on other countries to avoid trade relations with Iran."

Ghannadzadeh added: "Around the world, many power blocs are formed around economic agreements that appear economic in

nature, but in fact tie together their political and security interests so they can stand behind each other during tensions. In our own war, we saw that in countries where economic security was endangered—despite having no political ties with them—certain incidents were prevented due to economic interests."

The trade official clarified: "This shows that after this war, we must take economic diplomacy with other countries more seriously and view it with a broader perspective that also includes

political and social agreements."

He continued: "In today's world, countries can no longer produce or meet all their own needs. Trade exists to form global value chains, allowing nations to cover some of their needs through domestic production and the majority through trade. However, we are a country that, due to structural constraints and sanctions, has moved toward maximum internalization in all matters."

# The South Lebanon death marsh, where Israeli ambitions wither

Strike-back doctrine and asymmetric warfare turn Israeli occupation into a losing gamble

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The landscape of the confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel has undergone a seismic shift, marking the definitive end of an era. While the fragile ceasefire was initially framed as de-escalation, the reality on the ground has revealed a systematic campaign of Israeli violations that has forced the Resistance's transition into a new, more lethal doctrine.

Hezbollah has officially abandoned its policy of silence toward these breaches, a stance that previously deferred responsibility to the Lebanese government. Today, the Resistance enforces a strike-back equation where Israeli infractions trigger precise kinetic responses against the point of origin.

## Reciprocity in fire

The past few days have provided a lucid illustration of this new reality. On April 27, the deadliest day since the truce nominally began, Israeli airstrikes and artillery fire killed at least 14 people across southern Lebanon. The victims, including women and children, were targeted in towns such as Bint Jbeil, Kfar Tibnit, and Taybeh, where Israel continues its pattern of domicile.

This deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure, including mosques and bridges, has been met with a level of retaliation that has stunned the Israeli military command.

Hezbollah's response has been swift. In direct retaliation for the Bint Jbeil massacre, the Resistance deployed swarm drones and anti-tank missiles to incinerate an Israeli tank and a D9 bulldozer involved in home demolitions. Similar operations in Bayyada and Taybeh targeted artillery positions and troop concentrations, utilizing advanced fiber-optic FPV drones that rendered Israeli electronic jamming efforts useless.

## The trap of the death marsh

Battlefield analysis reveals that



the equation has shifted fundamentally in favor of the Resistance.

Hezbollah's field command has transformed the geography of the South into a death marsh for Israeli forces. By simultaneously striking the enemy's vanguard and its support echelons, the Resistance has induced a state of tactical blindness within the Israeli army.

The integration of 21st-century precision weaponry with the high-intensity, martyrdom-seeking spirit of the 1980s has made the maneuvering of Israeli columns a logistical nightmare.

This operational paralysis has shattered the "victory" narrative that Benjamin Netanyahu continues to market to his domestic audience, especially ahead of the upcoming elections. The deterrence equations have been recalibrated with geometric precision: the "Yellow Zone" for the "Yellow Zone," the northern occupied territories for areas north of the Litani, and Haifa and Tel Aviv for Dahiyeh.

When Israel attempts to terrorize Beirut, the Resistance ensures the sirens wail in the center of the regime's territories, proving that no settlement in the north is safe so long as southern Lebanon is under fire.

## Sovereign mandates

In an address delivered on April

27, Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem articulated a political framework forged in the heat of battle.

He categorically rejected direct negotiations with Israel, labeling them a "pointless" exercise and a "grave sin" designed to pressure the Resistance into disarmament. Qassem made it clear that the "Field" is the only legitimate representative of Lebanese interests, and its mandates are non-negotiable.

Hezbollah's five conditions for any lasting arrangement are absolute: a total end to Israeli aggression by land, sea, and air; the unconditional withdrawal of every Israeli soldier from all occupied Lebanese territory; the release of all detainees; the dignified return of displaced residents to their towns; and a comprehensive reconstruction program funded by the aggressors.

The Resistance will not accept a return to the pre-March 2 status quo, nor will it allow the U.S. to use negotiations as a back door for possible treacherous "normalization" with Tel Aviv.

## Political scavengers and the agony of the South

Despite the battlefield superiority of the Resistance, a parallel conflict is being waged within the Lebanese political arena.

The government of President

Joseph Aoun and the so-called U.S. mediators are being accused of acting as political scavengers, attempting to steal credit for a new equation that was achieved solely through the sacrifices of the Lebanese people, the Resistance, and its ally Iran.

These efforts to present a truce as a state achievement are viewed as a betrayal by the communities of the South, who have endured systematic destruction while the central government flirted with normalization.

Furthermore, many in the Lebanese political scene and Western-aligned media have largely disregarded the agony of the South. While daily shelling and the razing of ancestral homes have left over 2,500 dead and 7,000 injured since March, these actors remain preoccupied with the theatrics of U.S. diplomacy and their own power. This obscures the role of Israel and the U.S. as primary aggressors.

At the Tehran Times, we are deeply shaken yet further emboldened by the injury of our columnist Sondoss al-Asaad. Wounded this month in Israel's indiscriminate airstrikes on civilian neighborhoods, her ordeal highlights the daily risks endured by civilians living next to a rabid occupying power that threatens their land and safety.

However, the events have failed to dampen the spirit of the people, who recognize that their alliance with Iran and the "Unity of the Arenas" have been effective barriers against total Israeli annexation.

Tehran's strategy of linking the Lebanese front to the broader regional negotiations has effectively hampered Tel Aviv's freedom of action.

The reality is simple: the Resistance has redefined the terms of the war, and the future of Lebanon will be written by the fighters who have turned the border into a graveyard for Israeli ambitions.

## Quad erosion shows US no longer a reliable strategic partner: analysis

TEHRAN — The Quad, known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, is on the verge of collapse as Donald Trump's return to power has degraded its "geostrategic" significance, says a professor of political science and international relations at the University of Southern California.

Derek Grossman says it is hard to imagine the grouping, which includes Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S., another two and a half years of Trump's presidency.

Writing an article on the Foreign Policy website titled "The Quad Is on the Brink of Extinction", Grossman said the erosion of the grouping shows that "Washington is no longer a reliable strategic partner in the international system."

This is the text of the article:

Last year was supposed to have been India's turn to host a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue summit. But 2025 came and went without such a meeting—and now, New Delhi is trying to pick up the pieces by hosting the Quad's foreign ministers instead, possibly when U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio visits India in May. Comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, the Quad is a multilateral coordination group of like-minded powers that seek to counter China and collaborate on various other challenges.

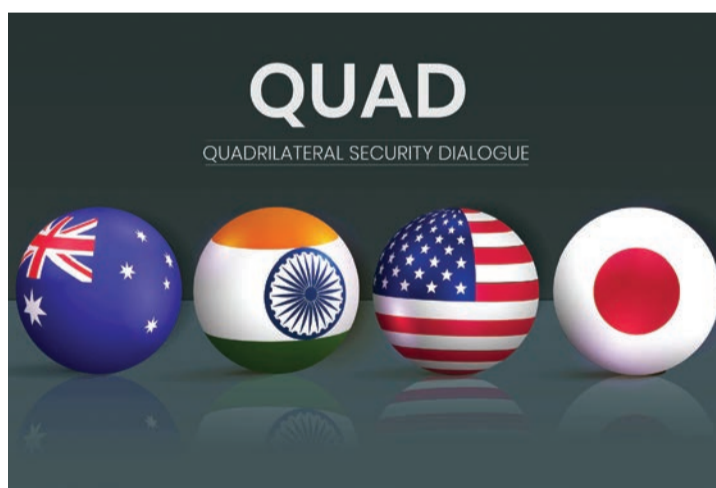
During his first term, U.S. President Donald Trump quietly resurrected the grouping, originally created at Japan's initiative in 2007, after a nearly decade-long hiatus. Yet since his return to the White House in 2025, Trump has refused to participate, leaving the Quad leaderless and degrading its geo-

strategic value. This spiral is likely to continue unless or until Trump decides to attend the Quad summit that Australia, as the rotating chair for 2026, may host later this year. If Trump declines again, then the Quad will be relegated to geopolitical insignificance, and it may even spell the end of the grouping entirely.

It wouldn't be the first time the Quad died. Back in 2008, the grouping collapsed due to some of its members getting cold feet on too aggressively challenging China. Elections had brought new leaders to power with less of a hawkish bend to their China policy. This time around, the primary reason for the Quad's demise would be more worrisome: Washington is no longer a reliable strategic partner in the international system.

Trump's decision not to attend India's 2025 summit appears to have had policy and personal reasons. On the policy side, he demanded that New Delhi agree to a new U.S.-India free trade agreement as a deliverable before his visit. But for whatever reason, the deal was still being negotiated. Additionally, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was battling Trump over steep new U.S. tariffs at the time; these levies were later relieved. Trump further harbored deep personal resentments toward Modi after he refused to acknowledge Trump's role in resolving a four-day war between India and Pakistan in May. Instead, Trump reset ties with Islamabad after Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif showed no such reluctance and even called for Trump to be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Another Quad member frustrat-



ed with Trump is close U.S. security ally Japan. Tokyo seems to have been caught off guard by Trump's initial imposition of a 24 percent tariff last year. Trump then threatened to increase the tariff rate another percentage point even after trade consultations in May, demonstrating the futility of negotiating with the United States even as a close friend. Only after further negotiations did the two sides agree to 15 percent. The whiplash continued in February, when the U.S. Supreme Court decided that Trump's tariffs were unconstitutional and he then announced a separate, across-the-board 10 percent tariff.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration originally demanded that Japan spend 3 percent of its GDP on defense. This target was subsequently increased to 3.5 percent to align with a similar NATO figure. At the time, Tokyo spent only about 1.4 percent on defense, meaning that Washington was requesting it to more than double its defense spending almost overnight. The

demand was so insulting to Tokyo that then-Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba felt the need to uncharacteristically and undiplomatically push back hard against Washington. The defense budget, he said last March after 3 percent was floated, "should not be decided based on what other nations tell [Japan] to do."

Under current Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, Japan's security cooperation and alignment with the United States remain intact, but the vibes are concerning and suggest that less, not more, will likely be done between the two countries in the future. Trump recently criticized Tokyo, for example, for not helping to reopen the Strait of Hormuz as part of his war against Iran. Japan is also poised to unlock its arms exporting potential, which has remained dormant since World War II. While Japan's ramping up of weapons production is applauded by Washington, it is actually largely in response to growing Japanese concerns about the U.S. preoccupation with wars in places such as the Middle East.

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

## PMF helps break the Iraqi PM impasse

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN — Iraq's largest parliamentary bloc has officially nominated its candidate for the country's powerful post of Prime Minister.

Following a meeting at the government palace in Baghdad, the Coordination Framework selected Ali Al-Zaidi as its nominee. Iraqi President Nizar Amidi has formally tasked the candidate with forming the new government.

Leaders within the Coordination Framework, most notably outgoing Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani and Nouri al-Maliki, agreed to name Al-Zaidi as prime minister.

Disagreements within the Coordination Framework that had delayed the nomination were ultimately resolved after two days of intensive discussions held at the home of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Chairman Faleh Al-Fayyad, according to well-informed sources familiar with the matter.

Efforts led by Al-Fayyad resulted in a consensus within the bloc on Al-Zaidi as a compromise candidate. He has an economic background and is widely regarded as a technocrat. Following this unanimous agreement, the Coordination Framework formally presented Al-Zaidi's name to the President.

"After considering the names of the candidates, Ali Al-Zaidi was chosen to be the candidate of the Coordination Framework bloc, as the largest bloc in the House of Representatives, to occupy the position of prime minister and form the next government," a Coordination Framework statement read.

Western reports have suggested that the Coordination Framework replaced its previous nominee, Nouri al-Maliki, due to concerns over potential U.S. sanctions on Iraq.

While Maliki was indeed nominated at one point, he revealed in a television interview that not all members of the Coordination Framework's 12-member committee supported his nomination. This indicates that the dispute was primarily internal and not linked to U.S. threats.

Several names were also announced after Maliki's nomination that similarly did not receive the full backing of the Coordination Framework's committee leaders. This further indicates that internal divisions within the Framework itself were a key factor behind the delay in selecting the prime minister-designate.

Al-Zaidi has been widely described by those who know him as a leader who combines realism with ambition. He has extensive experience in banking administration, investment, financial governance, and educational development, as well as in building an economic environment that supports long-term, sustainable growth.

According to sources familiar with his views, Al-Zaidi sees politics as a serious responsibility centered on state-building rather than simply a competition for power or influence. He believes that true leadership lies in transforming a country's potential into tangible, measurable achievements that improve governance and public welfare.

In addition to holding a bachelor's degree in law and being an active member of the Iraqi Bar Association, he also earned a master's degree in finance and banking.

This academic and professional background has enabled him to hold several prominent leadership positions, most notably serving as chairman of the Board of Al-Janoob Bank, chairman of the National Holding Company, chairman of the



Iraqi President Nizar Amidi (center) shaking hands with the prime minister-designate Ali Al-Zaidi

University of Al-Shaab, and chairman of the Ishtar Medical Institute.

Prime Minister-designate Al-Zaidi announced that his upcoming government will prioritize addressing both internal and external challenges, while working to build an Iraqi state that is balanced in its regional and international relations. He stressed that the current phase requires the combined efforts of all political and social forces to achieve lasting stability and progress.

Al-Zaidi expressed his gratitude to the leaders of the Coordination Framework for nominating him for the position, acknowledging their confidence and support.

He explained that Iraq's human and natural resources provide a strong opportunity to manage the country within a clear vision of a state that is economically capable and socially prosperous, with the potential to achieve long-term development and stability.

He pointed out that the upcoming government program will build on and complement previous efforts aimed at improving public services and social conditions, while also setting clear priorities that take into account risk assessment and the effective seizing of available opportunities. Al-Zaidi confirmed that the program is based on a vision of making Iraq a balanced country in both its regional and international relations, strengthening its position while maintaining constructive engagement with all partners.

Under the constitution, the designated prime minister has 30 days to present a proposed cabinet to parliament, and at least 167 votes are required to secure a vote of confidence.

In Iraq's power-sharing system, which has been in place since 2003 following the U.S.-led invasion of the country, the presidency is typically allocated to Kurdish politicians, the premiership to Shia Arabs, and the speaker of parliament to Sunni Arabs.

The new Prime Minister must now form a government amid the American and Zionist regimes' illegal war on neighboring Iran, the ripple effects of which have been felt in Baghdad. Several U.S. and Israeli regime strikes have killed PMF commanders as well as civilians during the war.

Factions operating under the Islamic Resistance in Iraq have been striking U.S. bases and interests linked to the Zionist regime. The attacks have halted since the ceasefire between the Islamic Republic and the United States.

Some resistance factions have declared that their "finger is on the trigger" should the war resume. They have also stated that they are closely monitoring U.S.-backed ground proxies, which could attempt to destabilize both Iran and Iraq.

## Amnesty wants US strike on Yemen to be studied as war crime

Amnesty International has called for a United States air strike on a migrant detention center in Yemen to be investigated as a possible war crime, Al Jazeera reported.

In a report released on Tuesday, the rights group said the strike on April 28, 2025, hit a detention facility in Saada in northwestern Yemen, killing at least 68 detainees and injuring 47.

The detention center had operated for years as part of a larger prison complex and had previously been visited by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations, who found no evidence the compound was being used for military purposes.

"The Trump administration's approach to its air strikes in Yemen from March to May 2025 should have set off alarm bells in the USA and around the world," said Nadia Dar, director of

Amnesty International USA.

"Instead, the U.S. administration has systematically weakened safeguards ... while simultaneously displaying a dangerous disregard for the lives of civilians endangered by armed conflicts," she added.

Amnesty said survivors interviewed nearly one year after the strike were still suffering serious physical and psychological harm and many were unable to afford treatment.

The organization spoke to six Ethiopian men wounded in the attack. It said five were unable to work because of their injuries while most now depended on financial support from relatives.

Four remain in Yemen, and two have returned to Ethiopia. One survivor, identified as Jirata, 30, said he lost one of his legs in the strike and had a metal rod inserted in the other.

## Iran eyes UNESCO status for ancient circular city of Darabgerd



TEHRAN – Authorities in Iran's Fars province have announced a comprehensive plan to pursue UNESCO World Heritage status for the ancient city of Darabgerd, citing its unique historical significance and archaeological potential.

Behzad Moridi, director general of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts for Fars province, said the site represents a key to understanding major transformations in Iranian history, spanning from the late Achaemenid period to the height of the Sasanian Empire. He made the remarks on Tuesday during a ceremony marking the appointment of a new head for the Darabgerd national base, attended by local officials.

"Darabgerd is not merely a historical site, but a gateway to understanding critical phases of Iran's past," Moridi said, adding that efforts are underway to address research gaps that have so far hindered its inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

He noted that the management change and the appointment of an academic figure signal a renewed determination to strengthen research foundations and prepare a robust nomination dossier. Moridi also stressed the importance of reassessing Darabgerd's historical links with surrounding regions, including Lar, Lamerd, and trade routes leading to the Persian Gulf.

Officials say the initiative is part of a broader strategy to promote sustainable development in eastern Fars province. Moridi highlighted ongoing cooperation with Shiraz University to draft a tourism development roadmap for Darab, aimed at preserving cultural assets while improving the livelihoods of local communities.

During the ceremony, newly appointed site director Alireza Askari-Chavardi outlined a

five-year strategic plan focused on redefining Darabgerd's historical identity through systematic archaeological research. He said the site had been excluded from a previous UNESCO nomination for Sasanian landscapes in 2018 due to insufficient studies.

"The primary goal now is to bridge these scientific gaps through specialized excavations and the publication of findings in international journals," Askari-Chavardi said.

He added that a major research project has been launched to investigate the city's historical mint and ancient routes connecting Darabgerd to the port of Siraf, once a major hub in regional trade networks.

Darabgerd, known for its distinctive circular layout, was one of the prominent urban centers during the Sasanian era. Archaeological evidence suggests the city had a highly organized and hierarchical settlement structure. However, following the Arab-Muslim conquest of Iran, the city underwent significant functional and spatial changes.

Studies indicate that during the early Islamic centuries, inhabitants increasingly concentrated in the northern sections of the city, while the southern areas became sparsely populated. Some residents also settled outside the western gate, reflecting shifts in urban patterns and social organization.

Officials said the precise delineation of the site's boundaries and buffer zones is expected to be completed in the coming months, a key step toward securing national and parliamentary support for the UNESCO bid.

At the end of the ceremony, Askari Chavardi was formally appointed as the new director of the Darabgerd national base.

and small squares. Many of the existing monuments preserve decorated surfaces, including stone carvings and mural paintings with hieroglyphic inscriptions, which illustrate the dynastic history of the city and its relationships with urban centers as far away as Teotihuacan and Calakmul in Mexico, Copan in Honduras or Caracol in Belize. A wider zone of key archaeological importance, around 1,200 hectares, covers residential areas and historic water reservoirs, today known as "aguadas". The extensive peripheral zone features more than 25 associated secondary sites, historically serving protective purposes and as check-points for trade routes. The peripheral areas also played a major role for agricultural production for the densely populated center.

Research has revealed numerous constructions, carved monuments and other evidence bearing witness to highly sophisticated technical, intellectual and artistic achievements that developed from the arrival of the first settlers (800 BC) to the last stages of historic occupation around the year 900. Tikal has enhanced our understanding not only of an extraordinary bygone civilization but also of cultural evolution more broadly. The diversity and quality of architectural and sculptural ensembles serving ceremonial, administrative and residential functions are exemplified in a number of exceptional places, such as the Great Plaza, the Lost World Complex, the Twin Pyramid Complexes, as well as in ball courts and irrigation structures.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Illegal wells near Persepolis sealed amid subsidence fears



TEHRAN - All illegal water wells within protected zones surrounding the ancient site of Persepolis have recently been sealed, a senior regional water official said on Tuesday, warning that land subsidence poses a growing threat to the UNESCO-listed monument.

Siavash Badri, head of the Fars Regional Water Company, said the measures were taken to curb unauthorized groundwater extraction in the Marvdasht plain, where the ruins of Persepolis are located. The site, known in Persian as Takht-e Jamshid, dates back more than 2,500 years and is one of Iran's most important archaeological landmarks.

"Today, there are no illegal wells remaining within the first, second, and third protection zones of Persepolis. All have been

sealed to prevent further land subsidence in the area," Badri said at a signing ceremony for a cooperation agreement with the provincial cultural heritage authority.

Iran has faced mounting water scarcity in recent decades, exacerbated by climate change, population growth and what experts describe as unsustainable groundwater use. Badri said groundwater levels in Fars province are declining by an average of 50 cm annually, with drops reaching up to 3 meters in some areas.

He linked the trend to the expansion of mechanized well drilling and decades of over-extraction, warning that the resulting land subsidence could damage historical sites and surrounding infrastructure.

Persepolis, founded by Darius the Great around 518 BCE as the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, sits on the fertile Marvdasht plain. The complex of palaces and monumental staircases, partly destroyed by Alexander the Great in 330 BCE, remains a symbol of ancient Persian civilization and attracts visitors from around the world.

Badri said preventing illegal water withdrawals was a "vital measure" to protect both the environment and cultural heritage in the region.

He also highlighted Iran's long history of water engineering, including ancient dam construction and qanat systems, underground channels used to transport water. "Iranians have been pioneers in water management for millen-

nia, and today the country ranks among leading nations in dam engineering without reliance on foreign expertise," he said.

The newly signed agreement with the cultural heritage department aims to document this historical knowledge and support the creation of a water museum in Fars province, he added.

Responding to concerns raised by heritage officials, Badri said his agency was prepared to ensure adequate water supply for maintaining green spaces at historical sites. He noted that additional water allocations had been approved for the gardens surrounding the tomb of the renowned Persian poet Sa'di in Shiraz.

## Dehloran's natural attractions spotlighted for tourism and environmental significance

TEHRAN – Three distinctive natural phenomena in Iran's western Ilam province have been highlighted by environmental authorities as nationally significant sites, underscoring the ecological and tourism value of the Dehloran region.

Alireza Mohammadi, director general of Ilam's Department of Environment, said the Dehloran natural heritage complex comprises hot springs, bitumen springs, and a bat cave, each classified as a national natural monument, indicating particular importance.

Speaking to ISNA, Mohammadi said the hot springs are located about 3 kilometers from Dehloran at the foothills of Siah Kuh mountain, near the bat cave. The springs, with temperatures of around 50 degrees Celsius, are known for their therapeutic properties. Due to high sulfate content, the water emits a strong sulfur odor that permeates the surrounding area.

He added that access to the springs is via the route from Dehloran toward the municipal hot spring complex. The bitumen springs are situated 2 to 3 kilometers east of the hot springs and approximately 4 kilometers from the city.

According to Mohammadi, the bitumen site

consists of three main springs in the eastern part of the area. These springs discharge a mixture of hot water and bitumen, forming large black pools with a flow rate of 3 to 4 liters per second. Sulfur emissions are also present in this area.

The third feature, the Dehloran bat cave, lies about 4.5 kilometers north of the city on the slopes of Siah Kuh, within a valley at an elevation of about 600 meters above sea level. The cave entrance faces south and is visible from Dehloran.

Mohammadi said the cave extends approximately 155 meters and contains numerous chambers and branches. Its floor is covered with a layer of bat guano exceeding one meter in thickness, producing a strong odor.

He noted that more than 40,000 bats inhabit the cave, representing five species, including long-winged, horseshoe, short-lipped, trident leaf-nosed, and large mouse-tailed bats. Some species reside year-round, while others are seasonal.

The three sites were designated as national natural monuments under a 1976 resolution by Iran's Supreme Council for the Environment.

Covering more than 20,000 square kilometers and bordering Kermanshah, Lorestan, and

Khuzestan provinces, Ilam province is known for its diverse landscapes. During Ordibehesht (late April to late May), the region reaches peak natural beauty, attracting visitors with its combination of ecological features and scenic terrain.

Beyond its natural attractions, Ilam's historical depth adds another dimension to its appeal. The province takes its name from Elam, the ancient civilization that once dominated much of southwestern Iran. Archaeological evidence indicates human settlement in the area dating back to around 5000 BC. Over millennia, the region has been shaped by successive empires, from the Assyrians and Medes to the Achaemenids and Sasanians, owing in part to its strategic location near major cultural and political centers such as Susa and the Zagros highlands.

Today, this combination of history and seasonal natural beauty makes Ilam a distinctive destination. In spring, when rainfall has revived its ecosystems and landscapes, the province offers an immersive experience of Iran's western highlands, one defined by greenery, flowing water, and a sense of renewal that extends across both nature and tradition.

## Shiraz restores 21 historical mosques in push to boost religious tourism



TEHRAN – Authorities in Shiraz have inaugurated restoration projects at 21 historical mosques as part of a broader urban renewal initiative aimed at reviving their social functions and strengthening religious tourism in the southern Iranian city.

The projects were unveiled on Monday in a ceremony held at the

centuries-old Jameh Atiq Mosque and attended by provincial and local officials.

Shiraz Mayor Mohammad-Hasan Asadi described the restoration effort as a strategic step toward enhancing religious tourism while preserving the city's cultural and spiritual heritage.

"Restoring mosques that are more than 1,100 years old is not merely a restoration project, but a safeguard of the historical and spiritual identity of Shiraz," Asadi said. The city is often referred to as the cultural heartland of Iran and holds deep religious significance.

He highlighted the challenges of working within historic urban fabric, noting that restoring ancient structures such as the Jameh Atiq Mosque requires continuous care and specialized expertise. "It is like caring for an elderly person who needs constant attention," he said, adding that municipal teams worked for nearly 11 months to complete the restorations.

According to Asadi, the projects not only preserve heritage but also provide essential infra-

structure for tourism, as visitors to Shiraz seek authentic cultural and religious experiences found in historic mosques.

He expressed confidence that the initiative would continue, with plans to place mosques at the center of urban management strategies. "These sacred spaces have historically been centers of community gatherings and decision-making, and we aim to restore that role," he said.

Shiraz, located about 60 kilometers from the UNESCO-listed Persepolis, has a history spanning more than two millennia. Once the capital during the Zand dynasty, the city is known for its contributions to Persian culture, poetry and architecture, and is home to landmarks such as the Arg-e Karimkhan and the Tomb of Hafez.

# Italian academics condemn US-Israeli attacks on Iran's scientific, research centers

TEHRAN – Chancellors of two Italian universities have censured the brutal attacks conducted by the US and the Israeli regime on Iranian universities, as well as research and educational centers.

The rector of the University of Milan, Marina Brambilla, and the chancellor of Unimore University (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia), Maria Chiara Rioli, have expressed their deep solidarity with Iranian academics and students.

Brambilla confirmed that the university is well aware of the consequences of armed conflicts for education and research systems, stating that the University of Milan condemns all forms of war and violence without exception, as they run counter to the principles of civil coexistence.

She highlighted that the main responsibilities of universities are to promote peace and talks, and that their top priority should be supporting students, safeguarding their lives, and ensuring students' rights to express their ideas and engage in participation under safe conditions, ISNA reported.

Rioli, the chancellor of Unimore University, condemned US-Israeli assaults, highlighting the importance of preserving the right of security for academics, and expressing support for Iranian scholars and students.

The Italian academics made the remarks in response to an official letter sent by Iranian Ambassador to Rome, Mohammad-Reza Sabouri.

The letter by Sabouri elaborated on the irreparable and destructive consequences of military strikes on educational centers, which led to the martyrdom of a group of professors, students, and researchers.

Highlighting the effective and constructive role of the two countries' universities in fostering scientific collaborations, and the Iranian students majoring in Italy, the official called on them to adopt a clear stance against attacks targeting Iranian universities.

Over 30 Iranian universities had been directly attacked by the United States and Israel since the war began in late February, according to Minister of Science, Research and Technology Hossein Simaei-Sarraf.

Five university professors and more than 60 students had been killed in the strikes, added Simaei-Sarraf, describing at-



The Iranian embassy in Rome

tacks on Iranian infrastructure as "crimes against humanity."

"The main reason the enemy targeted this sensitive infrastructure was that they did not want us to gain access to this technology," he said, adding that many Iranians abroad have contacted the university, offering to help fund its restoration.

On April 7, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations accused the United States and Israel of committing "unprecedented barbarism" by deliberately targeting Iranian universities and scientific institutions, calling the strikes war crimes that no amount of threats or military pressure can extinguish.

In a series of letters to the UN Secretary-general and the Security Council this week, Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani detailed a systematic campaign of state terrorism.

He cited an airstrike early on April 6 that severely damaged Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, including its faculties of civil engineering and electrical engineering, as well as research institutes for nanotechnology and environmental studies. That attack followed a similar strike on April 3 that hit Shahid Beheshti University, damaging its Laser and Plasma Research Institute.

"The intentional targeting of scientific institutions and universities constitutes a clear violation of international humanitarian law and amounts to a war crime," Iravani wrote.

The Iranian government's spokesperson, Fatemeh Mohajerani, speaking at a news con-

ference at Shahid Beheshti University, echoed that defiance.

"The enemies cannot extinguish the lamp of Iranian science," the spokeswoman said, adding that recent attacks were meant to undermine the achievements of the 47-year-old revolution and sever the bond between the nation and its homeland.

"These miscalculations are wrong. Iran is the common denominator of all Iranians. Those who have a homeland will stand behind their country, and Iranians living abroad will never give in."

**Scientific, educational MOU**  
In 2025, Shahid Beheshti University and the University of Salento, Italy, signed a memorandum of understanding to foster scientific, research, and educational ties.

During a meeting held in Tehran, Mahmoud-Reza Aqamiri, the chancellor of Shahid Beheshti University, and Fabio Pollice, the chancellor of the University of Salento, explored avenues for expanding scientific ties. They also became familiar with the capacities of the two universities, the ministry of science, research, and technology reported.

Based on the signed MOU, the two universities would cooperate in several areas, such as promoting educational, research, and cultural progress through holding joint educational courses for undergraduate and post-graduate students in selected fields, as well as providing sabbatical leaves for faculty members and Ph.D. students.

It also included conducting research projects, holding workshops and seminars collaboratively, sharing academic data, publishing joint articles, exchanging post-graduate students, as well as organizing faculty members' meetings.

Also, Allameh Tabataba'i University of Tehran and the University of Salento, Italy, signed an MOU to enhance scientific collaborations in social and human sciences.

During the meeting held in Tehran, Shoja Ahmadvand, the chancellor of Tabataba'i University, and Pollice discussed ways to expand scientific cooperation, Mehr news agency reported.

Teaching Persian and Italian languages, holding short-term courses, exchanging students and professors, launching an archaeology major and a Persian-Italian journal, conducting Erasmus+ projects in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, and donating books to the libraries of the two universities were among the points proposed by Ahmadvand, which was well-received by the Italian side.

For his part, Pollice suggested holding virtual Persian and Italian language courses, organizing online meetings among faculty members of the two universities and the two peer scientific groups to help them become more familiar with the existing capacities, fostering interactions between professors of the two universities, and exchanging professors and students for short-term courses with the aim of paving the way for long-term exchanges.

## 90 Iranian universities in THE Asia university rankings 2026

From page 1 ▶ Tehran University of Medical Science (111), University of Tehran (120), Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences (131), Isfahan University of Technology (137), Tarbiat Modares University (162), Shiraz University of Technology (166), and Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences (154) are placed fourth to tenth in the country.

The performance indicators are grouped into five areas: Teaching (the learning environment) 24.5 percent, Research Environment (volume, income and reputation) 28 percent, Research Quality (citation impact, research strength, excellence and influence) 30 percent, International Outlook (staff, students and research) 7.5 percent, and Industry (income and patents) 10 percent.

The 2026 ranking includes 929 universities from 36 territories. China leads the rankings. India has the most represented institutions (128). Malaysia joins the top 40 for the first time and doubles its top 100 places, and Yemen has a university ranked for the first time.

### Recent rankings

THE World University Rankings (WUR) 2026 placed 101 Iranian universities among the top universities in the world in 11 subject areas, compared to 81 universities in 10 subject areas in 2025.

These ten subject rankings include arts and humanities; business and economics;

clinical and health; computer science; education; engineering; life sciences; physical sciences; psychology; social sciences, and Law.

To create the THE WUR 2026 list, THE's data team drew on a comprehensive and growing database containing hundreds of thousands of data points on more than 3,100 global research universities, and employed a global Academic Reputation Survey of more than 108,000 leading scholars, who provided us with their expert views on the world's leading universities.

In addition, it also analysed 174.9 million citations to 18.7 million academic publications (from Elsevier's Scopus database) published over a five-year period between 2020 and 2024.

Amirkabir University of Technology, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, and Sharif University of Technology, ranking 351-400 globally, were placed first in the country.

Iran University of Science and Technology, and University of Tehran were placed second, with a global ranking of 401-500.

Shiraz University of Technology, and Tehran University of Medical Sciences ranked 501-600 globally; they ranked third nationwide.

The Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asia University Rankings placed 48 Iranian univer-

sities in the list of top universities in 2026, compared to 32 universities in 2025.

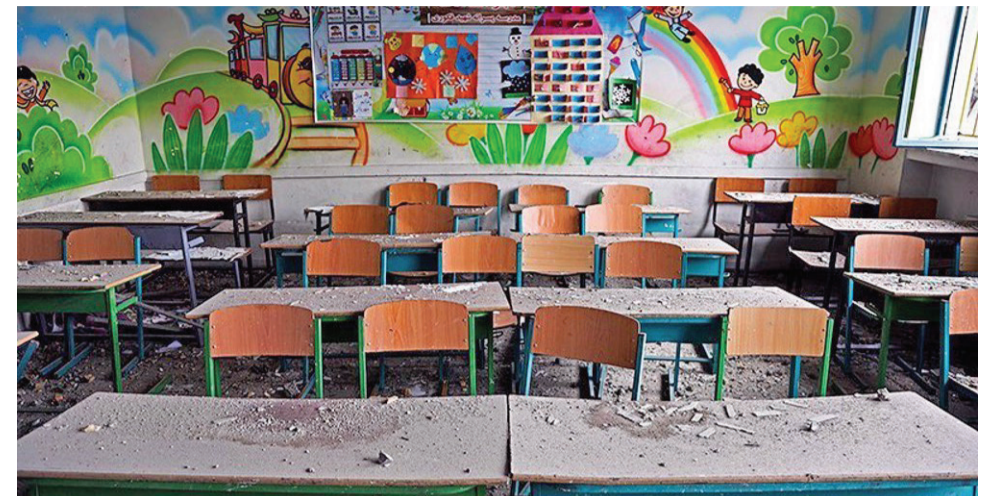
Published annually since 2009, the QS Asia University Rankings highlights the top universities in Asia each year.

University of Tehran (with a global ranking of 93) was placed first among Iranian universities, followed by Sharif University of Technology (ranking 142 globally) and Amirkabir University of Technology (ranking 169 globally), ISNA reported.

Iran University of Science and Technology (172), Isfahan University of Technology and University of Tabriz (212), Shahid Beheshti University (214), Shiraz University (241), Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (261), K.N. Toosi University of Technology (287), University of Isfahan (293) were ranked fourth to tenth.

The 11 indicators used to compile the QS Asia University Rankings are as follows: Academic reputation (30 percent), Employer reputation (20 percent), Faculty/student ratio (10 percent), International research network (10 percent), Citations per paper (10 percent) and papers per faculty (5 percent), Staff with a PhD (5 percent), Proportion of international faculty (2.5 percent) and proportion of international students (2.5 percent), Proportion of inbound exchange students (2.5 percent) and proportion of outbound exchange students (2.5 percent).

## Iran slams UNICEF for failing to denounce US-Israeli crimes against children



TEHRAN – The Iranian High Council for Human Rights has criticized UNICEF for failing to denounce the US-Israeli crimes against Iranian children during the recent aggression.

Nasser Seraj, the secretary of the High Council, has urged Catherine Russell, the executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund, to strongly and unequivocally condemn the illegal US-Israeli strikes that targeted Iranian children and organize immediate psychological, medical, and educational support for the affected kids.

"Undoubtedly, silence and inaction in the face of these crimes will weaken the credibility and status of international institutions and will be recorded in the memory of the international community," Seraj said in a letter to Russell, Press TV reported.

Meanwhile, Seraj said that during the imposed war, which began on February 28, the Zionist regime and the United States directly hit civilian targets, killing and injuring thousands of Iranian citizens, many of them children.

More than 380 children were martyred during the war, including seven under the age of one, 255 between one and 12, and 121 between 12 and 18, while 2,115 children were wounded, including 70 under the age of two, he added.

The rights official also noted that indiscriminate US-Israeli attacks struck residential areas across Iran, as well as schools, scientific centers, universities, business premises, manufacturing plants, health and service centers, railways, bridges, roads, transportation centers, border terminals, and planes carrying humanitarian and medical aid.

On the first day of the criminal aggression, he said, a primary school in the southern Iranian city of Minab was deliberately targeted, killing 73 boys, 47 girls, 26 teachers, 7 parents, a school bus driver, and a pharmacy technician at the clinic next to the school.

"Surprisingly, UNICEF has merely expressed concern instead of condemning this crime, which is unprecedented in all wars of the civilized world over the past few centuries. This is while protecting the rights of children and defending their lives and human dignity are at the forefront of UNICEF's goals and missions," Seraj said.

US-Israeli strikes against civilians, he

said, violate Article 2, Paragraph 4 of the UN Charter that prohibits any "use or threat of use of force" in international relations.

The unlawful attacks, he said, are also in breach of international humanitarian law and the principles enshrined in the Geneva Conventions.

Last week, the High Council condemned the "organized massacre" of 344 Iranian students and teachers during the recent illegal war of aggression waged by the United States and the Israeli regime against the country.

In a statement released on Monday, the council expressed "deep regret and abhorrence" over the enemies' criminal strikes on more than 80 schools, high schools, and educational centers in various Iranian provinces that martyred a total of 344 innocent students and teachers and injured hundreds more.

"The deliberate targeting of students and teachers in school environments not only blatantly violates Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child but also constitutes 'organized massacre' and 'terrorizing the civilian population,' aimed at paralyzing the education system and instilling fear and terror among Iranian families," it added.

The rights body also said that during the war, the aggressor regimes targeted 30 universities and higher education centers across Iran, destroying 154 scientific sites and killing five prominent professors and more than 60 university students.

It said that US-Israeli attacks on schools and universities constitute a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, a clear case of war crime, and a breach of multiple human rights principles, particularly the rights of the child.

"These actions are in stark contradiction to fundamental regulations, including Article 52 of the First Additional Protocol to the Four Geneva Conventions (1977), which mandates absolute protection for civilian and educational facilities; Paragraph 2 of Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which designates intentional attacks on educational buildings—upon fulfillment of other conditions—as war crimes; as well as the 1954 Hague Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)," it said.

## Karkheh welcomes first yellow deer born this year

TEHRAN – Karkheh National Park in Khuzestan province has welcomed the first Persian yellow deer born in the current Iranian year, which started on March 21.

Following the outbreak of Myiasis disease, the parasitic infestation of the body by the larvae of fly species, which decimated the population of Persian yellow deer, the provincial DOE in Khuzestan province started the deer conservation and management program in the Iranian year 1393 (2014), IRIB quoted Mohammad-Javad Ashrafi, an official of the Department of Environment (DOE), as saying.

The program's main objective is to revive the species through managing diseases and implementing conservation strategies. It also aims to help preserve animals by breeding them in captivity and in a controlled environment, as well as in natural habitats.

The provincial department of environment (DOE) is implementing the deer conservation program round-the-clock in natural habitats, particularly with greater intensity

during the breeding season.

Thanks to the effective implementation of the program, the number of Persian yellow deer has risen from 5 in the Iranian year 1398 (2019 – 2020), to 19 in 1405 (2025 – 2026, Ashrafi added).

The official went on to say that based on collected evidence, more yellow deer are expected to be born this year.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, the Iranian yellow deer is categorized as an endangered species.

Almost half a century ago, it was thought that the yellow deer species was extinct in the world. However, about 50 years ago, four yellow deer were observed in Dez and Karkheh forests, the primary habitats of the Persian yellow deer. They were released in different regions of Iran for better reproduction.

The birth of the yellow deer has raised hopes for the revival of this unique animal species.



Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**

Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 43051601

Email: info@tehrantimes.com

Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430

Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 43051505

Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.o. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

APRIL 29, 2026

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Most of those who lose their wisdom, do so because of being dazzled by greed, and shutting their eyes against fact.*

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:02 Evening: 19:08 Dawn: 3:41 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:14 (tomorrow)

## Iran's sovereignty over Hormuz marks new era for human dignity, veteran director says



TEHRAN- Prominent Iranian filmmaker Alireza Davoudnejad has released a statement addressed to world leaders, reflecting on the historical and spiritual significance of Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

In the text, titled "To the Leaders of the World", Davoudnejad describes Iran's authority over the strategic waterway as a "sleeping lion" in the collective unconscious of the Iranian nation that has now awakened and "walks firmly across the Persian Gulf," ISNA reported on Monday.

The director emphasized that the path to this sovereignty was carved out by the courageous actions of commanders who navigated through minefields, the report added.

He noted that tens of millions of Iranians are following this path to achieve the fundamental goals of the 1979 Islamic Revolution—namely, the just distribution of power, the realization of justice, and the sovereignty of the majority's will over executive laws.

"Do not vainly seek to suppress a will that is rooted in millennia of history," Davoudnejad warned global powers. He characterized Iran as a symbol of "humanity's revolution," standing in protest against a world order that revolves around oppression and the destruction of nature.

Concluding his message, the veteran filmmaker stated that Iran's firm hand on the Strait of Hormuz signals the dawn of a new era aimed at restoring human dignity and returning mercy and

compassion to all living beings.

The historical significance of Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz is deeply rooted in the very bedrock of Persian civilization, serving for millennia as a vital pulse for the Iranian plateau. From the expansive maritime reach of the Achaemenid Empire to the strategic expulsion of colonial Portuguese forces in the 17th century, this narrow gateway has never been merely a trade route; it has been the jugular vein of national integrity.

To the Iranian people, the Strait represents a legacy of guardianship—a geographic manifestation of the country's enduring role as the bridge between East and West. It is a symbol of a nation that has historically refused to be bypassed or sidelined, ensuring that its ancestral waters remain a testament to Persian resilience and a shield against external encroachment.

Moreover, the Strait is perceived as a sacred threshold where the Iranian spirit of independence meets the vastness of the global stage. In the collective consciousness, these waters are not just a strategic chokepoint but a witness to the courage of those who have defended the nation's dignity against overwhelming odds. For many, the Strait of Hormuz is a symbol of a deeper, metaphysical commitment to justice and human honor, representing a belief that true authority is derived from a spiritual connection to one's land and a righteous stance in a world that often prioritizes material power over human values.

## Cartoon of Day



Lights. Camera. Breaking News  
Cartoonist: Sally Lewis from the UK

## 4,000 children's e-books, audiobooks offered free in memory of Minab martyred students

TEHRAN- In a cultural initiative titled "Hopes of Iran's Tomorrow," a coalition of prominent Iranian publishers has made 4,000 e-books and audiobooks for children and young adults available free of charge, dedicated to the memory of the children of Minab.

The campaign is a collaborative effort between several leading publishing houses, including Elmi Farhangi, Daani, Avarsar, the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults- Kanoon, Ofoq, Nardeban, Qadiani, Comic City, and Tolooe Qoqnoos—and the Taqcheh digital book platform, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

According to the organizers, this cultural movement is a humble endeavor to safeguard the right to read and to keep the flames of hope and imagination alive for all children across the Islamic Republic of Iran. The participating publishers stated that these books are intended to serve as companions in moments of solitude and as a bridge to a brighter world for the younger generation.

The initiative comes as a tribute to the innocent children of Minab, emphasizing that despite the hardships and tragedies of recent times, the nation remains committed to the intellectual and spiritual growth of its future builders. By removing financial barriers to high-quality literature, the campaign seeks to ensure that every Iranian child can access the transformative power of stories and knowledge.

On February 28, the Shajar-



eh Tayyebeh girls' elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan province, became the site of a devastating massacre as the United States and Israel initiated their strikes against Iran.

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

Despite attempts by US and

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

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

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

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

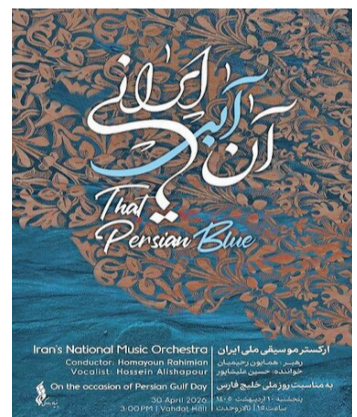
## Iran's National Orchestra to hold concert on Persian Gulf National Day

TEHRAN – Iran's National Orchestra, conducted by Homayoun Rahimian and featuring the vocals of Hossein Alishapour, will perform the concert "That Persian Blue" on the occasion of the Persian Gulf National Day in Iran on April 30.

The event will take place at Tehran's Vahdat Hall, with a national approach emphasizing the celebration of Iranian identity and the historical and cultural significance of the Persian Gulf.

"That Persian Blue" endeavors to express through music the deep bond between the people of this land and the Persian Gulf, serving as a reminder of the bravery and devotion of those who, throughout history, have sacrificed their lives to protect Iran.

Through the rich capacities of Iranian national music, this performance will create an at-



mosphere filled with emotion, national pride, and unity, seeking to resonate the collective voice of love for the homeland. A melody that, on the day named after the Persian Gulf, once again underscores Iran's identity, history, and grandeur.

Rehearsals for the National Orchestra under Homayoun Rahimian's direction began in April

at Roudaki Hall in Tehran. On April 11, the orchestra performed in the mourning ceremony for the martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, presenting the National Anthem of the Islamic Republic of Iran and other pieces about the homeland.

Rahimian, 72, is a musician, conductor, and composer. He holds a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Arts and has received a first-class artistic degree from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

He was the first musician of the Chamber Orchestra of the Radio and Television of Iran. He has also served as the senior member of the Expert Council of the Music Unit and the High Music Council of the Radio and Television Organization.

Being a prominent violinist, during his professional career

as a composer and musician, Rahimian has composed over 100 pieces of music.

Iran's National Orchestra was founded in 1998 under the conduction of the renowned Iranian composer Farhad Fakhreddini.

Maestro Fakhreddini attracted a huge number of musicians, including legendary vocalist Mohammadreza Shajarian, to collaborate with the orchestra.

The orchestra had been formed by Persian traditional instruments, strings and woodwind instruments. During its history, the orchestra focused on Persian composers' compositions including pieces by renowned figures such as Fakhreddini, Ali Tajvidi, and Hossein Alizadeh among others.

## Persian translation of John Steinbeck's "Journal of a Novel" to be released during 37th TIBF

TEHRAN – The Persian translation of "Journal of a Novel: The East of Eden Letters" written by the American author John Steinbeck will be released during the 37th Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF), which is to be held online in mid-May.

The book is translated by Peyman Talebi and Mehregan Publication has brought it out in 253 pages, ILNA reported.

"Journal of a Novel: The East of Eden Letters" is a letter collection written by the American author John Steinbeck to his friend and editor Pascal Covici, in parallel with the first draft of his longest novel, "East of Eden".

Steinbeck wrote "East of Eden" in a notebook given to him by Covici. As a daily warm-up writing exercise, he composed letters to Covici on the left pages of the notebook, then wrote the novel itself on the right pages.

The letters were not mailed or intended for publication, and are similar to journal entries. The letters were written between January 29 and October 31, 1951. The collection was first published in 1968, the year after the author's death.

The letters discuss the novel's development, plot, and characters; Steinbeck's philosophies and experiences of writing; and details of his daily life, such as his recurrent insomnia and his hobbyist carpentry projects. They also include his regular word counts and calculations of the pace at which the novel is being written.

One review praised the remarkable revelation the collection provides though sharing the intimate and unusually uninhibited thoughts of an important writer. This was echoed in a later review of the 1971 paperback edition, which called the letters "autobiographical material of the first order, casting a flood of light on the creative process, and standing as a unique testament to the struggles and joys of writing."

A syndicated review by John Barkham highlighted the mundane experiences described in Steinbeck's letters, writing that "the letters are endlessly fascinating, which is not to say they are essential or unique."

John Steinbeck (1902 – 1968) was an American writer and novelist. He won the 1962 Nobel Prize in Literature "for his real-

istic and imaginative writings, combining as they do sympathetic humor and keen social perception". He has been called "a giant of American letters".

During his writing career, he authored 33 books, with one book coauthored alongside Edward Ricketts, including 16 novels, 6 non-fiction books, and two collections of short stories. He is widely known for the comic novels "Tortilla Flat" (1935) and "Cannery Row" (1945), the multigeneration epic "East of Eden" (1952), and the novellas "The Red Pony" (1933) and "Of Mice and Men" (1937).

The Pulitzer Prize-winning "The Grapes of Wrath" (1939) is considered Steinbeck's masterpiece and part of the American literary canon. By the 75th anniversary of its publishing date, it had sold 14 million copies.

Much of Steinbeck's work employs settings in his native central California, particularly in the Salinas Valley and the California Coast Ranges region. His works frequently explored the themes of fate and injustice, especially as applied to downtrodden or everyman protagonists.