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Iranian Lego Crushes US Media Hegemony

How do a few young Iranians, with their sharp vision and creativity, wage war against the Western narrative empire?

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© Tehran Times/ Illustration by Bahman Yakhshour

Inside Iran's 14-point plan: The ultimatum Trump cannot ignore

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - Iran's latest comprehensive proposal aimed at bringing a permanent end to the US-Israeli war is a litmus test for the administration of President Donald Trump, which is struggling to extricate itself from the "quagmire" of the conflict.

Iran has submitted the 14-point plan to Pakistan, which is acting as an intermediary between Tehran and Washington. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeli Baghaei said late Sunday that Iran has received the US view of the proposal through Pakistan and is reviewing it. ▶ Page 2

Araghchi holds talks with German, Omani, Japanese, and Italian counterparts to end the war

TEHRAN - In a concerted diplomatic push to halt the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has held a series of telephone conversations with his counterparts from Germany, Oman, Japan, and Italy over the past 48 hours, outlining Tehran's initiatives for ending the conflict and restoring regional peace.

During a phone call on Sunday, Araghchi and German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl explored practical ways to bring an end to the imposed war. The Iranian top diplomat briefed his German counterpart on Tehran's active diplomatic initiatives and efforts to find a way out of the current crisis. ▶ Page 2

Human rights claimants and pirates: The mask comes off

By Hesamoddin Boroumand

TEHRAN - US President Donald Trump recently stated explicitly that the US Navy, in carrying out Washington's so-called naval blockade of Iranian ports, behaves "like pirates."

This confessional speech by Trump once again proved that in the logic of the United States—which claims hegemonic power in the world—there is no such thing as international law, and the liberal democratic system has openly shifted from liberalism to the law of the jungle. Previously, Joseph Nye, the soft power theorist who passed away a few months ago, predicted that Trump would squander America's soft power and governance credibility.

But the main focus of this note is to address Trump's confession to committing piracy from the perspective of human rights.

Over the past nearly four decades (since 1990 and the era of the superpower's global dominance), ▶ Page 2

\$1,000,000,000,000

Hidden price tag of Iran war that Pentagon isn't telling you

Firing \$4M Patriot missiles at \$50K drones depletes stockpiles, driving true war cost past \$1 trillion and threatening U.S. solvency.

TEHRAN- As the US-Iran conflict enters its third month, a heated clash on Capitol Hill has revealed a staggering discrepancy between the Pentagon's official figures and the projected economic reality of the war, potentially reaching \$1 trillion.

In a tense hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth found himself under sharp fire from lawmakers who accuse the

administration of drastically underestimating the financial burden of the ongoing war with Iran.

A recent investigation by Al Jazeera says that Pentagon officials, including acting comptroller Jay Hurst, testified that the total cost of "Operation Epic Fury" currently

stands at approximately \$25 billion. Hurst explained that this sum largely reflects the direct costs of munitions expended and equipment maintenance over the past two months.

However, the hearing quickly devolved into a bitter confrontation when Democratic

leaders and economists rejected that figure as dangerously misleading. Rep. Ro Khanna confronted Hegseth, arguing that while the Pentagon counts missiles, the administration is ignoring the macroeconomic bleeding. "Do you know how much it will cost Americans in terms of their increased cost in gas and food?" Khanna asked, estimating the real hit to the U.S. economy could reach \$631 billion—or roughly \$5,000 per household. ▶ Page 4

Iran's rightful sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz: Historical truth meets legal reality

By Mir Mohammad Alikhan

ISLAMABAD - I have been thinking for a long time to write about this. For years, I have watched the world talk about the Strait of Hormuz as if it were some neutral highway that anyone can police from afar. As someone who spent decades on Wall Street building investment portfolios around global energy flows, I have always kept a sharp eye on how trade actually moves across the oceans. An investment banker worth his salt has to understand not just the numbers on a screen but the physical choke points that make or break entire economies. ▶ Page 3



40th-day memorial ceremony for martyr Ali Larijani held in Tehran

TEHRAN - The fortieth-day mourning ceremony for former secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Ali Larijani, was held at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on Saturday.

The memorial ceremony was attended by senior officials, including First Vice President Mohammadreza Aref. Larijani was martyred along with his son in US-Israeli airstrikes in Tehran on March 17. On Wednesday, SNSC issued a statement describing Larijani as a brave and far-sighted figure whose legacy of revolutionary, wise, and noble statesmanship will serve as a brilliant model for Iranian officials for years to come.

A silhouette of conscience over the American capital

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

Two scenarios lie ahead for Trump

Etemad, in an interview with Gholamreza Karimi, associate professor of international relations, examined the scenarios ahead for Trump. According to Gholamreza Karimi, the root of the current crisis lies in the fundamental contradiction between Iran's insistence on preserving its nuclear rights and the United States' insistence on completely eliminating those rights — a contradiction that has turned into an unsolved puzzle for Washington. Many analysts compare Trump's situation to a strategic dead end for the United States. In the Iran case, Trump has set clear but practically unattainable red lines: including the complete end of the nuclear program, a 20-year suspension of enrichment, and the transfer of all enriched uranium reserves abroad. These demands are unacceptable to Tehran and leave no dignified exit for Washington. Trump is effectively faced with only two main scenarios: declaring a unilateral victory and making an emergency exit, which Tehran would interpret as an American defeat and a strategic victory for itself, or returning to military threats, even though the experience of the 40-day war has shown that such threats have limited effectiveness on the ground and drastically increase costs.

Donya-e-Eqtasad: Oil in the whirlpool of Hormuz

Donya-e-Eqtasad examined the global oil crisis following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Some analysts believe the market is still not optimistic about a rapid return to stability in the Persian Gulf, and geopolitical risk continues to be reflected in prices. From a macroeconomic perspective, rising energy prices have intensified concerns about the return of global inflationary pressures. On the global supply side, new developments are underway. The increase in US oil exports has compensated for part of the Middle East supply shortage, and the withdrawal of the United Arab Emirates from the oil-producing organization has added to the complexity of market dynamics. Overall, the oil market is now in a situation where it is simultaneously driven by two opposing forces: on one hand, concerns about supply shortages caused by the Iran crisis and the Strait of Hormuz, and on the other hand, fears of demand destruction due to extremely high prices. As long as this geopolitical knot remains unresolved, severe volatility and structural uncertainty will remain the dominant features of the energy market.

Iran shifts trade corridors to regional ports, delivering major blow to Dubai's re-export economy

TEHRAN — In the midst of the ongoing US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, the Islamic Republic has begun pivoting its trade flows away from the UAE's Jebel Ali port toward alternative hubs in Pakistan, India, and Oman. Industry experts say the move deals a significant financial blow to Dubai, which for years profited enormously from re-exporting goods to Iran.

According to Masoud Polmeh, secretary-general of the Iranian Shipping and Related Services Association, wartime disruptions have halted activity entirely at Jebel Ali, long considered the region's primary trade gateway.

"It is not correct to say that in past years only a port named Jebel Ali has been the origin of commodity and logistics exchanges in trade interactions with Iran," Polmeh said. He noted that Iran has historically maintained logistical links with ports such as Sohar and Salalah in Oman, Karachi in Pakistan, and Nhava Sheva and Mumbai in India.

"Now, under wartime conditions, activities at Jebel Ali port have stopped, and no activity is carried out through this port," he added.

For decades, Dubai served as Iran's de facto logistical bridge to global markets. Under the cover of legitimate trade, the UAE became Tehran's primary channel to circumvent international sanctions. Official figures show that non-oil trade between

Ettelaat: Undersea cables; Iran's pressure lever

Ettelaat analyzed the danger posed to undersea cables in the Strait of Hormuz as a highly significant crisis in the Persian Gulf and wrote: The Strait of Hormuz is not merely an oil passageway; in the depths of its seabed lies a network of fiber-optic cables that connect Asia to Europe and carry the global economy. One of the lesser-known but extremely important aspects of the crisis in the Persian Gulf is the danger facing undersea cables in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea, and these risks are linked to the militarization of Iran's geographic position in conducting what is called asymmetric warfare, both above and below the water. Iran has previously, in resisting attacks from the United States and Israel, blocked cargo traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, and in a similar manner, it could disrupt global communications and financial interactions through undersea cables. Apparently, the high risk posed by a war involving Iran affects not only existing cables but also other cables, forcing countries to build them both at sea and on land.

Sobh-e-No: Negotiating with Iran is going very hard for Trump

Sobh-e-No, in an article, examined Trump's difficult situation in the 40-day war. According to the article, the United States has been damaged in various ways during this war and is now facing multiple constraints. Negotiating with Iran is progressing very difficult for Trump. Iran is extremely strict regarding nuclear commitments and has not entered nuclear bargaining in Islamabad. The idea of a 'quick surrender', like the idea of a 'quick collapse', has failed. Iran wants major concessions for passage through the Strait of Hormuz, and the legal situation of this strait will not return to what it was before the war. The naval blockade has deepened the crisis for the world and has not resolved the issue of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran ultimately will not abandon its nuclear industry. As William Burns wrote in the New York Times, force alone is not enough. Patient diplomacy, precise planning, and multilateral pressure are necessary. For nuclear issues, strict inspections, long-term suspension of enrichment, and bartering stockpiles in exchange for reducing sanctions are required; and for the Strait of Hormuz, an agreement with key actors without creating side effects is essential.



Iran and the UAE reached nearly \$30 billion in recent years, with the vast majority consisting of re-exports of Western technology, machinery, consumer goods, and industrial inputs from Dubai into Iran.

Estimates suggest that the UAE earned tens of billions of dollars annually from re-exporting goods to Iran, with Jebel Ali alone handling upwards of 80 percent of Iran's seaborne imports at its peak. Trading companies in Dubai's free zones built entire business models around serving the Iranian market, taking advantage of short shipping distances, established banking networks (however fragile under sanctions), and political stability.

Now, with Jebel Ali effectively shut down due to the war and the Strait of Hormuz blockade, that revenue stream has abruptly dried up.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Inside Iran's 14-point plan: The ultimatum Trump cannot ignore

From page 1 ► The two sides held negotiations in Islamabad three days after a ceasefire went into effect on April 8, pausing the 39-day joint US-Israeli war that originally began on February 28. However, the talks ended without a breakthrough over what Iranian officials call Washington's "excessive" demands.

Tehran's 14-point plan includes guarantees of non-aggression, the US lifting sanctions on Iran and unfreezing Iranian assets, ending the US naval blockade, recognition of Iran's new mechanism for the Strait of Hormuz, war reparations, the withdrawal of US forces from the region, and the cessation of all hostilities, including Israel's operations in Lebanon.

Following the submission of the 14-point plan, the intelligence unit of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) issued a direct ultimatum, warning that Trump "must choose between an impossible military operation or a bad deal" with Iran. This ultimatum, capitalizing on domestic pressure within the United States, makes it clear that the ball is now fully in Washington's court.

Iran reasserted full control over the Strait of Hormuz in response to the US blockade on Iranian shipping, which was announced by the Trump administration after the failure of the Islamabad talks. This move has heavily restricted the



global energy market and sent shockwaves through the United States. US gas prices have hit their highest level in four years as a direct result of the conflict, sharply pushing up the cost of living for the American people and putting immense political pressure on the White House.

Because of these mounting economic strains, Americans are broadly dissatisfied with Trump's leadership on the Iran war. A majority of Americans disapprove of his handling of the situation by a margin of 66 percent to 33 percent. Trump's overall disapproval rating has reached 62 percent, the highest of his two terms in office.

Congressional Democrats are also highly critical of the administration's conduct in the war.

Last week, Democrats grilled Secretary of War Pete Hegseth in Congress, with California Democrat John Garamendi stating that Trump "has gotten himself and America stuck in a

quagmire of another war in the Middle East."

US media outlets have reported that the war with Iran—described by critics as a strategic failure and a miscalculation—has cost the US up to \$50 billion. Ahead of the upcoming midterm elections, and facing high economic and military costs from the conflict, Trump is actively exploring avenues to find a face-saving exit.

The IRGC also made it clear on Saturday that the Iranian armed forces remain on "full standby" for a return to hostilities if negotiations fail.

To avoid a return to war, critics argue that Trump should learn from the 39-day conflict that military force cannot bring Iran to its knees and that military action against Tehran ultimately backfires on Washington. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were under the illusion that Iran would either collapse or surrender

after a few days of war; instead, they are still gripped by a hubris that has left them in shock.

Iran's strong retaliatory response to the aggression sent a clear message that the US cannot implement a Venezuelan-style regime change scenario in Iran. The damage sustained by US forces, installations, and equipment in the region is indicative of such a failed scheme.

At least 16 American military bases and installations in the Middle East were damaged by Iranian strikes during the 39-day conflict, according to a recent investigation by CNN. The report says the damage includes high-value targets, with some facilities left effectively unusable.

Other US media outlets have previously published reports exposing the extensive damage the US suffered due to Iran's retaliatory strikes.

For now, Iran's proposal could pave the way for renewed talks between Tehran and Washington in Islamabad within seven days. Hence, the ball is in the US court. Iran's 14-point plan could provide Trump with a viable off-ramp, but it will only succeed if he acts with rationality and extricates himself from the influence of regional allies—particularly Netanyahu—as reports suggest that both Israel and the UAE are actively encouraging Trump to renew the war on Iran.

Araghchi holds talks with German, Omani, Japanese and Italian counterparts to end the war

From page 1 ► In a separate conversation, Araghchi discussed bilateral relations and regional developments with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi. Araghchi also briefed the Omani minister on a new proposal recently delivered to Pakistan—which has been serving as a mediator for indirect negotiations with the United States—aimed at permanently ending the war and establishing lasting peace in the region.

Also late on Saturday, Araghchi held separate phone talks with his Japanese and Italian counterparts, Toshimitsu Motegi and Antonio Tajani, outlining Tehran's diplomatic push to end the war and stressing the need for responsible international action.

In his call with Motegi, Araghchi discussed bilateral ties, regional developments, and ongoing Iranian diplomatic initiatives aimed at reducing tensions. He provided the Japanese minister with an update on the latest diplomatic developments.

Speaking with Italy's Tajani, Araghchi focused on the security, legal, and economic consequences of the US-Israeli military aggression. He updated the Italian minister on ceasefire-related developments and the broader diplomatic efforts, emphasizing the importance of a responsible role by European countries in the process.

The Iranian foreign minister expressed regret over the "non-constructive and irresponsible approach" of some European



countries, which he said continue to repeat "incorrect clichés" regarding Iran's nuclear issue. Araghchi reaffirmed that Iran's nuclear program is "absolutely peaceful" and urged those countries to condemn the US-Israeli aggression and hold the aggressors accountable for gross violations of international humanitarian law.

The United States and Israel launched an unprovoked war of aggression against Iran while

indirect negotiations between Tehran and Washington regarding Iran's peaceful nuclear program were still underway. During the conflict, the Israeli regime assassinated the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, as well as several senior Iranian commanders. In one of the war's deadliest attacks, a school in the southern city of Minab was bombed, killing 168 people, including schoolchildren.

Human rights claimants and pirates: The mask comes off

From page 1 ► the US has always attached a human rights appendix to every political action and foreign policy move in order to maintain its human rights posture. It pursued this human rights maneuver with two main goals: first, to lend credibility to Washington's soft power and a humanitarian image of the United States; and second, to use human rights as a lever to pressure independent states and exact concessions.

The fact that Trump has torn off the US mask and explicitly and openly regards Washington's foreign policy governance as that of pirates carries several important implications from a human rights perspective.

First, human rights have undergone a paradigm shift; commitment and law have been removed from the text and essence of human rights, replaced by force and brutality.

Second, a view that regards power in international relations as akin to pirates, declares it openly, and in fact takes pride in this piracy, has a clear meaning: the return of Western human rights to Hobbesian theory, which sees man as a wolf to man. In this human rights puzzle, man is free to tear apart and be a vampire like a wolf. This is precisely where Trump and Netanyahu are tied together, becoming sympathetic and aligned with each other, because both have beheaded human

rights to achieve their sinister interests.

Third, the current human rights order—based on UN human rights, whose foundation is Western human rights—has collapsed. If the UN's human rights mechanisms and institutions had a real and tangible existence, Trump should have been prosecuted as a major violator of human rights and international law, or at least his statements should have been condemned.

Therefore, we must hope that a new order is established, and that human rights claimants do not openly and clearly call themselves pirates in broad daylight.

Axios reveals Saudi-Emirati rift; experts warn of post-war hostility

TEHRAN— US officials fear key Arab allies may turn more hostile toward one another; Abu Dhabi's OPEC withdrawal aligns with American interests and deepens tensions with Riyadh.

A deep rift has emerged between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates during the recent US-Iran war, according to an Axios report citing American and regional sources. Simultaneously, the

US's formal exit from OPEC, widely seen as a move to align with Washington, points to unprecedented fractures within the Persian Gulf federation.

The American news outlet Axios, quoting US and regional officials, has reported that the war between the United States and Iran has caused a "deep rift" between Washington's two key Persian Gulf allies: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

According to the report, the Trump administration was slow to recognize the seriousness of the divide and ultimately chose a policy of non-intervention. At the onset of the crisis, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio informed Riyadh and Abu Dhabi that Washington would not take sides.

Senior US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, have expressed deep concern that

these two key Arab allies may emerge from the war even more hostile toward one another than ever before — a scenario that could severely destabilize the regional balance of power.

Political observers and energy analysts believe the rift is not merely a temporary disagreement but reflects deeper strategic divergences between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iranian Lego crushes US media hegemony

How do a few young Iranians, with their sharp vision and creativity, wage war against the Western narrative empire?

By Maedeh Zaman Fashami

TEHRAN - Until just a few months ago, anyone who wanted to shape narratives around war and politics had to stand behind official podiums or have access to massive media networks. Today, that equation has flipped in a surprisingly dramatic way: a few young creators, using nothing more than Lego figures, are now challenging the very figures who once dominated narrative-making figures like Donald Trump, a man who turned media into a personal instrument of power and is now himself being turned into a subject of satire and trolling. This time, the game is unfolding on a field where the rules are no longer dictated solely in Washington or inside major studios.

The team known as "Explosive Media," which produces these well-known Lego-style videos using artificial intelligence, explained in an exclusive conversation with Tehran Times that the project began as a simple collaboration among several media activists. They had previously worked together on social issues, particularly the Palestinian cause. But the real turning point came in the midst of crisis, during what they describe as the third imposed war by the US-Israeli coalition against Iran. Instead of repeating conventional formats, they decided to try something different. After experimenting with multiple ideas, they ultimately arrived at an unexpected form: storytelling through Lego.

At first glance, the choice seemed simple, even childish. But it quickly proved to be a powerful tool. They realized that when a deeply serious subject is presented through humor and an informal tone, the audience's mental resistance drops. Instead of confronting a heavy, direct message,



viewers become curious: "Let's see what happens next. Let's see how they portray this character." That curiosity keeps them engaged until the end.

One of the project's key aims has been to focus directly on figures like Trump and Netanyahu, individuals widely recognized as major producers and drivers of narratives within Western media. By creating satirical and ironic videos, this young Iranian team has effectively turned Trump into a subject of trolling, flipping the usual media dynamic. In this reversal, politicians who typically control narratives have themselves become the narrative. The same tools once used to shape public opinion are now being turned against their original wielders. Arab media outlets and some Western analysts have openly acknowledged that Iran, through these simple yet clever formats, has managed to gain the upper hand in the "war of narratives," outpacing the United States and, in particular, raising awareness among younger Western audiences. This, in turn, has made these videos not only widely viewed but also a source of irritation and concern for certain Western political circles.

As the creators themselves noted,

their initial target audience was not international. They aimed to meet global standards, but their primary focus was domestic. However, something quickly changed the trajectory: the videos gained far more traction abroad—especially in the West. Views surged, but more importantly, so did the reactions. Western audiences didn't just watch; they analyzed, discussed, and shared the content. That was when the team realized they were facing a much larger "cultural market," one with a broader, more curious, and more engaged audience.

From that point on, their strategy shifted. The focus turned toward international audiences, but not in a vague or generalized way. Their targeting became precise. They understood, for instance, that rap music resonates more with younger audiences, while references to figures like Michael Jackson connect better with older generations. Even the choice of music style, humor, and cultural references is carefully calibrated based on audience segmentation. This is not random production; it is deliberate design.

Another notable aspect of this project is the team's deep understanding of Western culture. Many

Western media outlets and audiences have pointed out how accurately these videos capture not only the language and cultural nuances of the West but also its internal contradictions. This insight comes from continuous study books, foreign media, and social platforms alike. In a sense, what is often described as "Western cultural dominance" is here being repurposed as a tool against itself.

As the project expanded, it began drawing increasing attention from Western media outlets. Reports, interviews, and analytical pieces appeared across platforms such as the BBC, CNN, The New Yorker, and other mainstream publications. According to the team, some of this coverage was partial or shaped by bias. Nevertheless, even such attention ended up amplifying their reach. Each time a Western media outlet engaged with these videos, it effectively contributed to their wider dissemination.

Beyond media coverage, political reactions have also been significant. Many well-known Western politicians and analysts have shared these Lego videos and commented on them. For instance, military analyst Patricia Marins shared one video depicting the reconstruction of Iranian infrastructure and described it as "the best piece produced by an Iranian group." Trita Parsi, vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, wrote that a recent Lego video signaled a notable shift moving away from mocking the US military toward directly engaging the American public, potentially aiming to reduce tensions and promote peace. He described this approach as a reversal of strategies long used by the United States itself.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran's rightful sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz: Historical truth meets legal reality

From Page 1 ▶ That is why I have studied maritime routes with the same intensity I once applied to bond yields and commodity futures. Today, after reflecting on the history of law and the raw economics of trade, I feel it is time to speak plainly. The Strait of Hormuz belongs to Iran. It is Iran's sovereign right to manage it. No country, especially America, sitting thousands of miles away, has any business dictating terms or imposing blockades. Let me walk you through why I believe this with all my heart.

My Wall Street lens on global trade and why this matters to me

When I first started my career on Wall Street back in the late eighties, I learned quickly that global trade is not abstract. It is tankers sliding

through narrow passages, oil contracts signed in boardrooms, and political decisions that can wipe out billions in value overnight. I spent thirty-plus years analyzing everything from crude shipments out of the Persian Gulf to LNG routes heading to Asia. In my experience, an investment banker cannot afford to ignore the geography of trade. You have to know which straits carry eighty percent of Japan's oil or why a single disruption in the Persian Gulf sends shock waves through Chinese manufacturing and Indian refineries. That knowledge came from poring over shipping manifests, satellite data, and historical maps, not from some think tank briefing.

I have seen how most of the oil and gas moving through the Strait of Hormuz is destined for Asian markets, not American ones. China, India,

Japan, and South Korea are the real stakeholders here. America imports almost none of its oil through this route anymore. Yet Washington acts as if it owns the waterway. In my view, that is pure economic hypocrisy. As someone who has structured deals, financing pipelines, and tanker fleets, I can tell you that true trade security comes from the coastal nation that has lived with these waters for centuries, not from a distant superpower flexing military muscle. Iran has every incentive to keep the strait open and safe because its own economy depends on it. I have watched this dynamic for decades, and I am convinced that only Iran can manage it responsibly without turning it into a geopolitical football.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

LATES NEWS

northbound cargo vessel reported that his ship had been attacked by small boats.

Further details regarding the nature of the attack, potential damage, or casualties have not yet been released. The UKMTA has advised vessels transiting the area to exercise caution and report any suspicious activity.

■ Gen. Rezaei on US piracy: Prepare to face a graveyard of your carriers, forces

A senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei pointed to the US piracy, telling Americans to wait for the graveyard of your aircraft carriers and forces.

In a post on his X account on Sunday, Major General Mohsen Rezaei, who was the former IRGC chief commander, wrote, "The US is the only pirate in the world that possesses aircraft carriers. Our ability to confront pirates is no less than our ability to sink warships."

"Prepare to face a graveyard of your carriers and forces, just as the wreckage of your aircraft was left behind in Isfahan," he added.

■ Bombsite at Iranian university to be turned into 'war museum'

Iran's authorities plan to turn the heavily bombed Isfahan University of Technology in the center of the country into a museum about the impact of US-Israeli strikes.

"The current damaged site will be preserved as a war museum at the university to

remain a document of the country's scientific oppression in history," said the head of the institution, Zafarollah Kalantari.

Other areas have been allocated for the "construction of a new building and provision of advanced equipment" for the university, the official IRNA news agency quoted him as saying.

Kalantari said initial assessments put the cost of the damage to the university's infrastructure at about \$11m.

■ Despite military threats, Iran-US diplomacy continues

Alexandru Hudisteanu, a military analyst and maritime expert, says a return to war between the United States and Iran is possible but not inevitable despite fiery rhetoric being espoused by both sides.

"The diplomatic track is still continuing. For all the positioning President Trump is doing on social media, we have to understand negotiations are happening behind the scenes in official channels," Hudisteanu told Al Jazeera.

He described the ongoing diplomacy as "very hard and incisive" with "hiccups" thwarting progress in talks.

"Yes, the nations need to position themselves militarily to show in case negotiations fail the alternative is there - the military track is still active, and it's just an operational pause," Hudisteanu said.

SPORTS

Iran learn fate at 2026 IHF Beach Handball World Championship

TEHRAN - Iran have discovered their opponents at the IHF Men's and Women's Beach Handball World Championship on Saturday.

Featuring 16 men's and 16 women's team, the two global events will be played side-by-side on the edges of Jarun Lake, Zagreb, Croatia from 23 to 28 June 2026.

The competition features 16 teams, initially divided into four preliminary round groups of four teams each.

The top three teams in each group (12 in total) move through to two main round groups of six teams each, with the top four in each then moving through to the quarter-finals and subsequent semi-finals, bronze medal, placement and final matches.

The bottom team in each of the four preliminary groups will move into the consolation round.

2026 IHF Men's Beach Handball World Championship

Group A: Spain, Portugal, Iran, United States of America

Group B: Hungary, Denmark, Tunisia, Puerto Rico

Group C: Germany, Brazil, Argentina, Italy

Group D: Croatia, France, Oman, Australia

The IHF Men's and Women's Beach Handball World Championships made their debut in 2004 in Egypt, with 32 national teams set to travel from across the world to compete for global glory in Asia.

Ali Gholizadeh likely to miss 2026 World Cup

TEHRAN - Iran's dynamic winger, Ali Gholizadeh, is facing a potential World Cup nightmare after suffering a devastating knee injury during Lech Poznań's clash with Motor Lublin in the PKO BP Ekstraklasa Saturday night and his participation in the 2026 World Cup appears to be in serious jeopardy.

The incident occurred as Gholizadeh went into a challenge with a Motor defender. In a bid to avoid a sliding tackle, the winger attempted to leap over his opponent but landed disastrously. All eyes were on his left knee as he crumpled to the turf, his agonizing grimace of pain sending shockwaves through the stadium and beyond.

Gholizadeh was stretched off the field, and the severity of the injury is feared to be significant, casting a dark cloud over his World Cup aspirations. The images of his painful exit have fueled concerns that this setback could sideline him for a prolonged period, potentially derailing his participation in the upcoming World Cup.

Iran not keen on Marco Octavio's return

TEHRAN - Brazilian beach soccer coach Marco Octavio has previously expressed interest in working with Iran's national team as a technical advisor, but the Iran Football Federation appears reluctant to cooperate with him.

Iran's national beach soccer team won the championship at the 2026 Asian Beach Games under the guidance of Ali Naderi. Octavio, who previously served as the national team's head coach, said in an interview with ISNA that he would like to join the setup.

"I will speak with my captain Ali Naderi and the Iran Football Federation. I would like to help Naderi as a technical advisor in the next World Cup project. It would be a dream to use my experience to help Iran win this world title," Octavio said.

However, it seems the national team's coaching staff is not keen on working with Octavio, believing that Iran already has capable and ex-

perienced coaches.

Persepolis coach Vieira's future remains uncertain

TEHRAN - The future of Osmar Loss Vieira's presence on Persepolis' bench remains uncertain.

The coaching situation at Persepolis for the upcoming season is one of the biggest mysteries in Iranian football.

If Persepolis is only to participate in domestic competitions, it seems highly unlikely that the club would be willing to pay nearly \$1.5 million in salary to Osmar. Instead, they prefer to trust local coaches at a significantly lower cost.

The latest news regarding Osmar's relationship with Persepolis is that the Brazilian coach has repeatedly requested the club to clarify the status of his contract. However, the club officials have strangely asked Osmar not to make any decisions about his future until after the 2026 World Cup and once the Iran league schedule and Asian qualification spots are finalized.

Additionally, there is a serious disagreement between the Brazilian coach and Persepolis management, which is now the main focus of ongoing discussions.

Esteghlal foreign player not heading to Iran

TEHRAN - The foreign players of Esteghlal football club are not heading to Iran.

They are waiting for clarification on their outstanding payments and the schedule of upcoming league matches before making any moves.

Last week, Esteghlal's caretaker manager Bijan Taheri, stated that the club had told the foreign players to arrive in Tehran by May 3 and also said the Blues will start the training four days later. However, recent reports indicate that the foreign players are reluctant to come to Iran at this time, as they await final decisions regarding their claims and the continuation of the league.

Daneshdoust: Piazza a valuable opportunity for Iran volleyball

TEHRAN - Ehsan Daneshdoust, a member of Iran's national volleyball team, stated on Sunday that head coach Roberto Piazza represents a significant opportunity for Iranian volleyball.

He expressed hope that Piazza, much like his predecessor Julio Velasco, can continue and smoothen the national team's growth trajectory.

"Despite all the challenges, fortunately, the national team camps have begun," Daneshdoust said. "I must thank the Volleyball Federation for making these training sessions possible under the current circumstances. For now, the training is being led by the Iranian coaches, and Roberto Piazza is expected to join the team during the camp in Turkey."

Praising Piazza, he added, "Piazza is truly a great coach. Since taking the helm of the national team, he has brought a very high level of discipline, planning, and technical expertise. Beyond his technical knowledge, he excels in the psychological management of players, fostering a more professional and cohesive team environment."

The Iranian outside hitter further lauded the Italian coach: "In my opinion, Piazza is a valuable asset for Iranian volleyball. I hope that just as Velasco played a crucial role in advancing Iranian volleyball, Piazza can also sustain and pave the way for the national team's continued development."

Concluding with his club future, Daneshdoust said, "I haven't reached an agreement with any club yet. I have both domestic and international offers, but my primary goal is to play in a reputable foreign league. I'm currently reviewing the proposals and hope to make a sound decision for the upcoming season."

Iranian engineers set 99-day record for power plant unit installation

TEHRAN – Iranian engineers have set a new record by reducing the installation and commissioning time of a large-scale Class E gas power unit to 99 days, significantly below the global benchmark of seven to eight months, a senior official said.

Speaking to state radio, a deputy at the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) said the achievement was recorded during the development of the Neka Power Plant, where the fourth gas unit was synchronized with the national grid 21 days ahead of schedule.

He said the expansion project includes two gas units with a capacity of 183 megawatts each and a 180-megawatt steam unit operating in a combined-cycle configuration. The first unit had already come online in July last year, during a 12-day conflict period, while the second unit was connected to the grid in late April this year.

The official noted that despite challenging conditions during the Ramadan period and the Nowruz holidays, work on power plant development projects continued without interruption. On average, about 1,000 personnel were active daily across 23 project sites linked to capacity expansion in both public and private sector power plants.

According to the official, around 40 percent of the installation and commissioning process for the second gas unit was completed during this period. From the arrival of main equipment — including turbines, generators and transformers — to electricity generation, the entire process took just 99 days.



He said this breaks both the previous domestic record of 130 days for the first unit at the same site and the typical global timeframe of seven to eight months for similar Class E gas units.

The units are fully domestically manufactured, with total investment estimated at 100 trillion rials (about \$200 million). Originally designed for a capacity of 159 megawatts, Iranian engineers upgraded the units through engineering modifications and technological improvements to reach 183 megawatts.

Efficiency has also increased from 34 percent to 36.8 percent, and is expected to rise further to about 53 percent once the steam unit is completed, transforming the facility into a fully combined-cycle power plant.

The project is expected to supply electricity to around 240,000 people and play a key role in boosting capacity, supporting industrial, commercial and household consumers, and stabilizing voltage and frequency in the national grid, particularly during peak summer demand in northern regions such as Mazandaran and Tehran.

Post-war economic growth scenarios, necessity of consolidating Iran's sovereignty over Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN—An economic expert believes that if Iran's authority over the Strait of Hormuz continues and compensation is received from the aggressor countries, not only will infrastructure reconstruction proceed quickly, but it will also be possible to achieve economic growth above 6–8 percent and automatically lift sanctions.

Hamidreza Jeyhani, in an interview with IRNA, responded to the question: After the war ends, what priorities should economic reconstruction and the post-war period have? He said: Since the end of the war and how it will unfold are not yet clear, we must consider the post-war period through different scenarios. The best scenario is receiving compensation from the belligerent countries and consolidating Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

Expressing hope that through battlefield and diplomatic efforts this imposed war can be well managed and brought to an end, he stated: To achieve this victory, we must maintain control and intelligent management of the Strait of Hormuz.

The economic expert emphasized that receiving compensation from the aggressors must be on the agenda of officials, especially in the diplomatic arena. He added: Achieving this requires approval from relevant global authorities. If we can do this, then according to the rules governing post-war reconstruction and subsequent national models, the reconstruction of industries and infrastructure that have been attacked and damaged will be carried out with great success and speed.

A way to render sanctions obsolete

Jeyhani stated: I believe that in that case, we will move toward an economic leap following our military and political superpower status in the region, and we will achieve an economic growth leap domestically. I can even predict that we will have economic growth of over 6 to 8 percent.

Regarding the actions necessary for economic growth, he replied: If compensation and authority over the Strait of Hormuz are achieved, the most important benefit will be

that our economic and political interaction equations with the world will be completely transformed. That is, if we can control the management of the Strait of Hormuz, the sanctions regime will automatically become obsolete.

Consolidating Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz is essential for advancing economic goals

Emphasizing that even for implementing economic projects in the post-war period, we need to consolidate Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, he said: Imagine we need to import certain parts to reconstruct damaged sectors of the economy. In that case, some countries might refuse to cooperate under the pretext of sanctions, but if Iran controls the Strait of Hormuz, they will be forced to cooperate.

In this regard, Jeyhani referred to the incident of a French ship carrying chemical fertilizer passing through the Strait of Hormuz, which led France to engage with Iran.

He explained: When the international sanctions regime collapses and becomes obsolete in this way, we can also expect foreign investors to enter various economic fields, because then Iran's position as the supreme military and security power in the Persian Gulf will be consolidated.

Priority should be on returning growth to the economy

Regarding the outlook for this year's inflation rate, given last year's rise and war-induced inflation, the economic expert said: In my opinion, in the current circumstances, economic policymakers' primary target should not be inflation.

Jeyhani added: Even from a livelihood perspective, the government can support various financing models, such as issuing bonds or borrowing from different segments of society and businesses, and provide necessary support packages. Therefore, in the current situation, we should not target reducing inflation but rather seek the return of economic growth and its increase.

\$1,000,000,000,000

Hidden price tag of Iran war that Pentagon isn't telling you

TEHRAN—As the US-Iran conflict enters its third month, a heated clash on Capitol Hill has revealed a staggering discrepancy between the Pentagon's official figures and the projected economic reality of the war, potentially reaching \$1 trillion.

In a tense hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth found himself under sharp fire from lawmakers who accuse the administration of drastically underestimating the financial burden of the ongoing war with Iran.

A recent investigation by Al Jazeera says that Pentagon officials, including acting comptroller Jay Hurst, testified that the total cost of "Operation Epic Fury" currently stands at approximately \$25 billion. Hurst explained that this sum largely reflects the direct costs of munitions expended and equipment maintenance over the past two months.

However, the hearing quickly devolved into a bitter confrontation when Democratic leaders and economists rejected that figure as dangerously misleading. Rep. Ro Khanna confronted Hegseth, arguing that while the Pentagon counts missiles,



the administration is ignoring the macroeconomic bleeding. "Do you know how much it will cost Americans in terms of their increased cost in gas and food?" Khanna asked, estimating the real hit to the U.S. economy could reach \$631 billion—or roughly \$5,000 per household.

Economics asymmetric warfare

The disparity in costs is starkly illustrated by the daily exchanges in the Strait of Hormuz. Reports indicate that the U.S. has fired Patriot missiles costing \$4 million each to intercept Iranian Shahed drones worth as little as \$50,000.

Furthermore, the administration has requested a \$1.5 trillion defense budget for the next fiscal year—a 42 percent increase marking the largest military spending expansion since World War II. Beyond the bombs, Harvard economist Linda Bilmes—renowned for accurately predicting the \$3 trillion cost of the Iraq War—warns that the long-term obligations for veterans' care and depleted weapons restocking will push the final bill for the Iran war past \$1 trillion.

Global fallout: World Bank warns of development in reverse

Beyond Washington's budget bat-

tles, the global economy is buckling under the weight of the conflict. According to a recent World Bank report, the war has driven global commodity prices up by an average of 16% in 2026. The World Bank's Chief Economist, Indermit Gill, warned that the shock spreads in "cumulative waves": first energy, then food, then generalized inflation. The bank specifically warned that fertilizer prices are set to rise 31%, which threatens to push up to 45 million more people into acute food insecurity worldwide if the Strait remains closed.

Strategic mission creep and domestic fallout

The United States is currently trapped in a strategic "no-war, no-peace" equilibrium. Analysts note that stockpiles of precision-guided munitions like Tomahawk missiles, crucial for a potential peer conflict, have been significantly depleted and may take up to four years to replenish. At home, with gas prices hitting \$4.23 a gallon and a Reuters/Ipsos poll showing only 22% approval of Trump's cost-of-living management, the war has transformed from a foreign intervention into a severe domestic political liability ahead of the midterms.

Iran war: Trump's most expensive economic mistake for Europe

TEHRAN—The aggression of the American-Zionist coalition against the Iranian nation has not only transformed the military and political equations of the region but has also had deep and widespread effects on the economies of various countries, including the major economic powers in Europe that were considered Trump's allies.

According to an IRNA report, two months after the US and Zionist regime's military aggression against Iran, the effects and consequences of this aggression are increasingly impacting people's lives worldwide. Escalating recession and inflation are the key indicators of these developments. What distinguishes this war from previous conflicts is the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the vital artery of global energy, which has disrupted global supply chains and halved economic growth in many countries, especially in Europe.

In such circumstances, the most important question is: What economic costs has this imposed war inflicted on the world's nations, and when might an exit from this crisis be possible?

While it was initially assumed that the effects of the war would be limited to Iran or the West Asia, recent statements by European officials have revealed the reality. The latest remarks from German authorities indicate that this European country has suffered the greatest blow from the conflict. Lars Klingbeil, Germany's Finance Minister, recently revealed that Trump's war with Iran has halved Germany's economic growth and sharply increased fuel and energy costs, despite Berlin not being involved in the war.

This bitter reality shows that the war against Iran is not a regional crisis but has targeted Germany's energy supply chains and industry. Furthermore, Germany's automotive industry, already struggling with the energy crisis caused by the Ukraine war, is now paralyzed by rising energy prices and disruptions in the supply chain of parts through the Strait of Hormuz.

It is clear that the main culprits are the United States and Israel, who have disrupted global energy stability by starting the war against Iran. Germany, which considers itself innocent and unrelated to this war, has ef-

fectively become a hostage to White House policies.

Katharina Reich, Germany's Federal Minister of Economics from the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), had only bad news to deliver in Berlin. She expects the war in the Persian Gulf to limit Germany's economic growth to just half a percent this year.

Economic problems in Europe are not limited to Germany. Other countries, such as Italy, have also sharply reduced their growth forecasts. Giorgia Meloni, Italy's Prime Minister, announced last week: "My current priority is to contain inflationary pressures on prices, especially energy, given the impact of the American war against Iran. In the current international crisis we face, controlling prices and energy, preventing the inflationary impact that clearly destroys GDP growth, must be a priority."

In contrast to Germany and Italy, Spain's economy has performed surprisingly well. According to data published by Spain's National Statistics Institute (INE), the country's GDP grew by 0.6% in the first quarter of this year compared to the previous quarter, reaching 2.7% on an annual basis. In this regard, Carlos Cuerdo, Spain's Economy Minister, stated in an interview that the Spanish economy maintained its growth rate at the beginning of the year marked by the war in Iran.

He attributed this success to investment in renewable energy (with a 55% share in the energy mix), diversification of oil import sources (the US and Africa instead of the Persian Gulf), and a €5 billion support package for households and businesses. However, this growth did not come without cost. Spain's inflation rate rose amid the war, and although it fell to 3.2% in April, fuel prices remained high. Spain's central bank had previously warned of significant economic slowdown if the war continued.

In this context, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, emphasized last week that the consequences of the conflict in West Asia could last for months or even years. She referred to the recent energy crisis as the second major energy crisis within a short period of four years and pro-

posed three sets of measures to overcome the energy crisis in Europe: first, increasing coordination at the European level; second, protecting consumers and businesses; and third, systematically modernizing energy consumption.

Strait of Hormuz: World economy's chokepoint

According to political and economic experts, one of Iran's winning cards in this war has been closing the Strait of Hormuz. This began with managing vessel traffic based on international conventions under conflict and war conditions, then escalated to a complete closure due to the US naval blockade of Iran.

This narrow waterway between Iran and Oman naturally carries one-fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas. The World Bank has warned that the war in the West Asia has caused the largest oil supply reduction in history, and energy prices will rise by an average of about one-quarter this year.

Analysts at Oxford Economics believe that returning oil exports from war zones to pre-war levels is a very time-consuming process. For example, three years after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, oil production in Iraq and Kuwait was still more than 60% below pre-war levels.

With the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, ships must take longer, more costly routes to transport oil, further fueling price increases. The World Bank forecasts that it will take at least six months for maritime transport through the Strait of Hormuz to return to normal, during which time the global economy will grapple with an unprecedented shock.

How long will economic recovery take?

The key question on many analysts' minds is when the economies of warring countries (and even third-party nations like Germany) can return to normal. According to Oxford Economics, inflation caused by the Iran war will likely disappear completely two to three years after the conflict ends. However, even the most optimistic scenarios suggest that even with an immediate ceasefire, the psychological effects and logistical disruptions will continue to affect Germany and other European economies for at least another year.

Iran advances 16 fisheries port projects, completes 5 last year

TEHRAN – The director general of fishing ports development and management at the Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO) outlined actions taken in the previous Iranian calendar year 1404 (ended in late March), pointing to the implementation of around 16 major projects in the fishing ports sector, including breakwater construction, wharves, dredging of basins, and expansion of support buildings and core infrastructure along the southern coasts (the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea).

According to Ministry of Agri-

culture, Mohammad Taheri also announced the completion of five port projects which, after being handed over to provincial fisheries bodies and operators, were officially inaugurated and brought into operation with the presence of senior officials.

He noted that despite unforeseen challenges and the severe conditions of the imposed war, effective steps were taken toward the construction, completion, and development of fishing ports across the country. These efforts aimed to upgrade infrastructure,

improve efficiency, and enhance working conditions for fishermen.

Project management under wartime conditions

The official acknowledged that some projects faced limitations or partial suspension due to wartime conditions, stressing that the department, in coordination with the organization's leadership, prioritized projects and continued pursuing key initiatives with full commitment. He expressed hope that with

improved conditions, full implementation of these projects would resume.

Budget outlook and future prospects

Taheri said that out of the total approved budget of 42 trillion rials (about \$84 million) for the previous year, only 6.0 trillion rials (about 14.3 percent) had been allocated. Despite the funding constraints, efforts focused on optimizing resource management to achieve the best possible outcomes.

A silhouette of conscience over the American capital

A man's bridge vigil forced D.C. to look up and turned a landmark into a moral argument against the war on Iran

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — High above the Anacostia River, where the wind never seems to settle and the noise of the American capital turns faint and metallic, a lone figure sat in the white arc of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge like a living question the conscience could not ignore.

Guido Reichstadter, 45, a father of two with a background in mathematics and physics, pitched a small tent 168 feet in the air, unfurled a black banner, and remained there for a second day as traffic below crawled and helicopters circled overhead.

The scene was at once grave and strangely beautiful, theatrical and austere, a human body set against the machinery of an empire.

A voice from the arch

Reichstadter's protest was rooted in moral indictment. Speaking from the bridge, he said the U.S. was engaged in "acts of mass murder" in his name and that he refused to remain complicit.

He described the war as "an atrocity." He said many Americans opposed it in principle but had not yet acted strongly enough to stop it. Reichstadter also called Trump's rhetoric about destroying the Iranian civilization "abominable."

His written statement on X pushed the point further, demanding an immediate end to "the Trump regime's illegal war on Iran" and urging mass "non-violent action and non-cooperation."

Reichstadter does not read as a fixed icon of radical theater so much as a man who has tried to reason his way into a refusal. A mathematician and physicist climbing a bridge to protest mass killing gives the act an



uncomfortable clarity: he is not asking for sympathy, but for accounting. His vigil is a solemn withdrawal of consent.

Douglass and the new chains

The bridge itself sharpens the symbolism. Named for Frederick Douglass, the abolitionist who escaped slavery and devoted his life to exposing America's false claims of liberty, the span becomes an ironic stage for a protest against a new system of bondage: the political, financial, and military ties that bind Washington to endless war.

Douglass fought literal chains; Reichstadter is condemning the modern ones, the kind forged through sanctions, airstrikes, and naval blockades that are presented as sanitized policy but carry devastation as their primary aim.

The location also matters geographically. The bridge links the center of federal power to communities on the other side of the river that have long lived with the unequal burdens of American militarism.

The digital echo

The reaction online helped turn the scene into a cultural object. Among the most notable was the tribute from Explosive Media, whose AI-generated

Lego-style post praised Reichstadter's dignity and described his protest as a moment worth preserving in memory.

That kind of remixing says something important about the age in which this happened: protest no longer lives only in the street or on cable news, but in digital forms that can travel faster than official narratives. In that sense, this was both an old-fashioned act of civil disobedience and a thoroughly modern struggle over image, attention, and moral legitimacy.

A wider rebellion

The protest's force comes partly from timing. It unfolded amid a broader wave of antiwar mobilization across the United States, including major May Day rallies in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, and other cities.

Reichstadter's posture would be easy to dismiss if it appeared isolated. It is not. It belongs to a season of public anger in which the anti-war cause has merged with labor demonstrations, immigrant-rights marches, and a broader exhaustion with executive overreach. The numbers suggest a country not rallying behind the war but recoiling from it.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll found

in late March that 66 percent of Americans wanted the U.S. to end its campaign of aggression against Iran quickly, even if that meant not achieving all war aims, while 58 percent disapproved of U.S. strikes against Iran earlier that month. CNN polling in early March showed disapproval at 59 percent and a majority expecting a long war.

A lineage of refusal

Reichstadter's action also sits within a long American tradition of conscience-driven disruption.

The comparison to Aaron Bushnell, who self-immolated outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington in 2024 to protest U.S. complicity in Gaza, is impossible to avoid, though Reichstadter's protest is sustained rather than terminal.

So are the Vietnam-era draft-card burnings, the Catonsville Nine, bridge occupations during anti-war campaigns, Standing Rock blockades, and climate-era direct actions that used infrastructure to interrupt business as usual.

Reichstadter's answer is to make the body itself the argument. He did not stand on the bridge to decorate a protest already happening elsewhere; he stood there to force a public reckoning with the gap between policy and conscience.

Reichstadter offered a single human silhouette against a campaign of aggression that has killed at least 3,468 Iranians.

Against the abstraction of imperial violence, he offered a father's refusal. And against the claim that the public must remain passive while bombs fall in its name, he offered a simple, devastating counterclaim: that conscience still has a place high above the river, and that it can still be seen.

Syria and confusion between external hopes and internal crises

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN — The current Syrian administration is not seeking political or military alliances as much as it is pursuing economic partnerships to ensure its survival within an increasingly complex region.

The current situation in Syria goes beyond a stream of rapid daily news, shaping a peculiar form of political pragmatism that the new administration struggles to maintain. Recent foreign tours, starting at the Antalya Forum in Turkey and extending to Persian Gulf capitals and European stops via Cyprus, are more than diplomatic visits; they are part of a broader political rebranding effort that shifts attention from urgent domestic crises.

At the same time, these efforts attempt to portray Syria as a necessary player in the global economy, driven by developments such as the illegal U.S. and Zionist regime's war on Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The European leg also seeks to remove the "extremism" label from the government and preserve its "international legitimacy."

Officially, Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani announced Wednesday the conclusion of President Ahmed al-Sharaa's Persian Gulf tour, stating that it focused on "strengthening deep-rooted brotherly relations and exploring ways to boost economic development and reconstruction," affirming "Syria's steadfast position alongside Arab brothers and full solidarity in facing various threats."

Beyond diplomatic statements, reports and information strongly indicate that the "economy" was the main topic Syrian officials carried to both Antalya and the Persian Gulf, aiming to present Syria (with its vital geographic location) as a major economic opportunity for the region by making it a possible alternative for Persian Gulf oil transit away from the Strait of Hormuz.

During the Persian Gulf tour, Syrian officials focused on presenting this security issue and their capacity to achieve it, trying to attract

Persian Gulf investments and reconstruction aid through this mutually beneficial door, from their perspective.

But they have not received, so far, any official or serious approvals for this project, despite some Persian Gulf opinions seeing promising opportunities in Syria that align with the Syrian vision for reconstruction and leveraging Syria's geographic position for energy transit lines.

However, Persian Gulf reservations also appear significant here, whether regarding doubts over overall domestic and security stability, Western sanctions not yet fully lifted, or the weak legal environment for investment. Therefore, no tangible change on this front is expected in the foreseeable future.

This relentless effort by Syrian politicians to return Syria to the regional and international arena, as they constantly repeat, is reflected in ongoing statements during these visits about "Syria's role" in the region, even though that role has historically been tied to different ruling systems, in their orientations, doctrines, methods of influence, and even slogans, different from the current government's orientations.

Superficially, this mode of political engagement, meant to appear more prominently during President Ahmed al-Sharaa's recent tour and accompanying delegations, attempts to affirm that Syria wants to move beyond the "framework of axes" and avoid positioning itself in a clear political stance with all its calculations and complications.

Damascus wants to open up to various regional and international powers, including all Persian Gulf states, but this is not easy for a country where the Zionist regime occupies large chunks of its land, intrudes daily into its territory with no resistance, and violates its sovereignty, or within a region undergoing a new order imposed through expanding illegal American and Israeli wars.

Rather, it is impossible for a new govern-



ment whose "international legitimacy" is covered by numerous binding conditions, chief among them making great efforts for the benefit of an American-Zionist axis waging a devastating war on some regional countries, who strongly oppose a new "Middle East Project". Hence, such "balance" seems impossible under these circumstances.

All this is happening amid an internal economic crisis that can no longer be ignored or patched up with crude, dull media shows that no longer convince anyone among the displaced Syrian societal factions searching for the bare necessities of life and dignified living.

On this front, parallel to foreign diplomatic moves, the government reverts to militia-backed tactics aimed at absorbing tension and consolidating its central authority.

The former so-called "Jaish al-Islam" leader Essam al-Buwaydani emerges as a model of political maneuvering; his return from the UAE after a complex legal process was not just a coincidence of timing but rather a deliberate "mediation" by the new administration to calm the so-called "Jaish al-Islam" militia, which had begun threatening domestic escalation. The government's resort to mediating with a former adversary, whose supporters' protests nearly caused a diplomatic crisis with the Persian Gulf, reflects an urgent desire to close internal security gaps and cement the new rulers' image as capable of containing all contradictions.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Has Merz faced reality after mindless remarks against Iran?

TEHRAN — After one year in office, it seems that German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is gradually coming to his senses or facing the realities on the ground by seeking to correct himself regarding his surprisingly repetitive and reckless remarks about Iran.

In the June 2025 war against Iran by Israel, which was later joined by the U.S., Merz, who was participating in the G7 summit in Canada, said Israel is "doing the dirty job for all of us."

His thoughtless remarks drew sharp criticism from international law experts and senior analysts. Critics said the German leader's statement further erodes international law and the rules-based order established in the wake of World War II, promoting a "law of the jungle" at the cost of global stability.

In an op-ed published by the Guardian, the Sydney-based international law professor Ben Saul said support for Israel's war had no legal grounding and set a dangerous precedent. He described Israel's attack on Iran as "part of a pattern of unlawful 'anticipatory' violence against other countries."

The statement by Merz, whose country had always adopted a conciliatory approach toward regional and international conflicts since World War II, came as a shock to the world.

Again, when unrest erupted in Iran in early January 2016 over price increases, which were the result of Western-led illegal sanctions on the country, Merz made another hostile remark, saying that the Islamic Republic's "days are numbered."

Also, two days after the U.S. and Israel jointly started a war of aggression against Iran on Feb. 28, Merz claimed that appeals to international law had failed to achieve the purpose of Tel Aviv and Washington.

Contrary to Merz's claims, both before the June and Feb. wars, Iran was negotiating with the U.S. for resolving differences over Tehran's nuclear program with the mediation of Oman. Two days before the new war, negotiators from the two countries held talks in Geneva and were going to meet again. They also agreed on a meeting of nuclear experts in Vienna next week, where the International Atomic Energy Agency is based.

To justify the war on Iran, Merz claimed that Iran threatens Israel's very existence and bears responsibility for the acts carried out by groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, adding, "Together with the United States and Israel, we share the goal of ending the terror of these regimes."

Now, noticing that the U.S. is being caught in the Iran quagmire and his country is feeling the economic pains of the war because of the disruption in the oil market due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, coupled with the failure of the U.S. in the war in which its president had vowed to bring Iran into submission in a matter of a few days, the German chancellor feels hopeless and has changed his tone, at least expediently.

For example, on April 27, in an unusually abrupt rebuke over the conflict, the chancellor admitted the U.S. entered the war without a "truly convinc-



ing" plan for an exit or for negotiations.

"The Iranians are obviously very skilled at negotiating, or rather, very skillful at not negotiating, letting the Americans travel to Islamabad and then leave again without any result," Reuters quoted Merz as saying.

He added, "An entire nation is being humiliated by the Iranian leadership, ... And so I hope that this ends as quickly as possible."

Without going into the details of his talks, it seems the chancellor is naive enough when it comes to politics. It is quite understandable that resolving the disputes between Iran and the U.S. in a single meeting, especially after 40 days of war, cannot be resolved in one session. Add to this a set of problems accumulated over more than four decades, coupled with Iran's mistrust of the U.S., which has been gravely deepened by the United States' illegal and surprise war on Iran. This issue, even if the U.S. shows goodwill, will take weeks or months to resolve in a calm atmosphere.

By comparing the war on Iran to previous U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Merz has come to recognize Iran's resilience against foreign invasion. It took Merz nearly two months to acknowledge that "the Iranians are obviously stronger than expected."

Though initially made a huge gaffe by claiming that Israel and the U.S. could not achieve their goals legally and thereby they attacked Iran, in an informal European Union summit in Cyprus on April 25, he said the war on Iran was "completely unnecessary". His critique centered on the belief that the hostilities serve no justifiable purpose and are causing avoidable global instability.

To analyze Merz's unsubstantiated claims about the war on Iran, there is no evidence that Iran was aware of the October 7 attacks or that Iran was supporting Hamas. Iran's support for Hamas has been just moral. How had it been possible for Iran to help Hamas, which has been under siege from the air, sea, and land since 2007?

Furthermore, beyond Merz's assessment that the Trump administration lacks a "truly convincing" strategy, the reality is that Iran is proactively setting the agenda and dictating the course of events. While Trump seeks an exit from the Iranian quagmire, he has found himself unable to do so. To extricate himself from his war of choice, Trump must now be prepared to meet specific demands, chief among them to give credible guarantees that the U.S. will never attack Iran again and that all sanctions on Iran are lifted forever.



Supporters of Iran in the heart of Brazil

Across the bustling streets of São Paulo, hundreds gathered for a powerful show of solidarity, marching proudly before the grand neoclassical facade of the Faculty of Law. A massive Iranian flag billowed with purpose, flanked by Palestinian banners and other flags. Protesters, some on bicycles, others with backpacks, filled the crosswalk with a shared sense of conviction. Amid the movement, a resonant chant rose above the crowd: "Long live the Ayatollah." This was a definitive declaration of loyalty to Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei as the leader of the Resistance Front, a striking moment of international solidarity captured in the heart of Brazil.

Ardabil to develop tourism-focused villages, boost infrastructure



TEHRAN - Ardabil province is moving forward with plans to organize rural areas around tourism development, allocating funding to designated villages and prioritizing infrastructure projects to support the sector, local officials said on Saturday.

Farzad Qalandari, governor of Ardabil, said during a meeting with cultural heritage and tourism officials that a comprehensive tourism plan and a detailed investment framework for the city had been prepared, reflecting the region's untapped potential.

"Necessary funding will be allocated to target tourism villages, and the implementation of rural development plans with a tourism axis is on the agenda," he said, according to state media.

Qalandari outlined a series of initiatives aimed at revitalizing rural economies, including the promotion of handicrafts, eco-tourism projects and the establishment of "creative tourism houses" in villages. He added

that authorities are also focused on completing tourism infrastructure and providing broad support for private-sector investors.

He stressed the importance of restoring historical markets and buildings in Ardabil, noting that dedicated funding would be assigned to conservation projects to better integrate the city's heritage assets into tourism development strategies.

The governor also announced the formation of a special committee to organize events for "Ardabil Day," an annual occasion intended to highlight the province's cultural and historical significance.

Located near the borders with the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ardabil province is known for its diverse attractions, including natural landscapes, religious sites and historical landmarks, drawing significant numbers of visitors, particularly during national holidays and the summer season.

Kerman province begins process to register natural heritage sites in its Golbaf region

TEHRAN - Kerman province has launched the process of documenting and preparing registration dossiers for several natural landmarks in its Golbaf district, a local official said on Saturday, in a move aimed at securing national protection status and boosting sustainable tourism.

Farnaz Farahimoqaddam, the deputy for cultural heritage at the provincial department of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said experts had begun fieldwork and documentation efforts in Golbaf, a historically and environmentally significant area located southeast of the city of Kerman.

"The process of compiling dossiers and documenting a number of natural sites in Golbaf has been initiated for their inclusion in the National List of Natural Heritage," she told reporters.

Farhimoqaddam said the initial phase focuses on several prominent natural features, including an ancient cypress tree, a historic plane tree known locally as "Chenar Khaneh Kohneh," and a cluster of plane trees along Valiasr Street in Golbaf. The dossiers are being prepared for submission to Iran's national registration council, which evaluates and approves entries into the country's official heritage lists.

She stressed that the registration of natural and historical sites goes beyond administrative procedures, describing it as a cornerstone for long-term conservation and structured tourism development.

"Registration in the national list establishes a legal framework to prevent destruction and unauthorized alterations," she said. "It also creates the conditions for proper conservation and meaningful introduction of



these valuable assets."

Farhimoqaddam said the ongoing documentation process includes detailed surveys, photographic records, geographical mapping and the collection of historical and environmental data required for national registration.

The official added that the process of registration also contributes to raising public awareness about the importance of preserving natural heritage, encouraging community participation in protection efforts.

"The presence of a site on the national list not only supports conservation but also helps introduce these treasures to a wider audience," she said.

The Kerman region is something of a cultural melting pot, blending various regional cultures over time. It is also home to rich tourist spots and historical sites, including bazaars, mosques, caravanserais and ruins of ancient urban areas. It is bounded by the provinces of Fars in the west, Yazd in the north, South Khorasan in the northeast, Sistan-Baluchestan in the east, and Hormozgan in the south. It includes the southern part of the central Iranian desert, the Dasht-e Lut.

Minab school tragedy to be enshrined in national and global memory

TEHRAN - Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts said on Saturday that authorities are mobilizing the country's full cultural capacity to transform the Minab school tragedy into a lasting national and international memory, outlining plans for a broad campaign spanning arts, media, education and legal action.

Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri described the incident involving students at a girls' school in the southern city of Minab as a case that must move beyond a "temporary response" and be institutionalized within Iran's collective historical consciousness.

"This event must become a lasting phenomenon in the mind of both Iranians and the global public," he said. "Our objective is to shape a global consensus around this crime and ensure it is recorded and stabilized within international legal frameworks and cultural discourse."

The announcement comes amid heightened scrutiny of the circumstances surrounding a US-Israeli attack on the Shajareh Tayyebeh School on Feb. 28, which resulted in the deaths of more than 150 students.

The minister said preliminary research groups had already been formed to develop a comprehensive narrative framework for what he described as a national project. Plans include establishing a dedicated museum for the victims, producing urban memorials, and documenting eyewitness accounts.

Authorities also intend to commission a wide range of cultural productions, including feature films, music, literature, poetry, animation and visual media, aimed at embedding the story across generations.



Salehi-Amiri emphasized that responsibility for the initiative would not rest with a single institution. Instead, he called for the formation of a national task force involving cultural, artistic, educational and media bodies to coordinate efforts and ensure what he termed a "division of national labor" in preserving the narrative.

"We must utilize all cultural tools available," he said, pointing to measures such as naming streets and public squares after the victims, incorporating the subject into school curricula and textbooks, and developing media products capable of engaging younger audiences.

He added that the government aims to integrate the memory of the victims into everyday life, ensuring their names and images are continually reproduced across public spaces, educational institutions, digital platforms and cultural events.

A Reuters investigation found that the school had maintained a visible online presence for years prior to

the strike, including photographs of students and activities, raising questions about how targets were selected.

Satellite imagery dating back to at least 2018 showed features consistent with a functioning school, while archived versions of its website displayed images of students in classrooms and at play.

The online footprint has prompted questions among analysts about the vetting of strike locations. Reuters previously reported that investigators at the US Defense Department believe American forces were responsible for the attack and that outdated targeting data may have been used.

Footage reviewed by Reuters and analyzed by munitions experts suggested the weapon used was likely a Tomahawk cruise missile, though one expert said a glide bomb could not be ruled out.

Iran has condemned the strike as a violation of international law and

has called for accountability through global legal mechanisms.

Salehi-Amiri said legal and media follow-ups at the international level would form a parallel track to cultural initiatives, aimed at ensuring the case gains traction beyond Iran's borders.

He also highlighted the role of the Iranian diaspora, saying expatriate communities could help amplify the narrative globally through cultural diplomacy.

"The cultural capacity of Iranians abroad can play a significant role in shaping a global narrative of this tragic incident," he said.

Salehi-Amiri concluded that embedding such events in historical memory requires sustained effort, continuous narrative production and a constant presence in public discourse.

"We are determined to make the tragedy of the Minab school victims part of the historical memory of contemporary Iran," he said.

UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace undertakes preservation project for historic textiles

TEHRAN - A comprehensive project to organize, document and conserve a collection of historic textiles housed in the ethnography museum of Golestan Palace has been completed, the site's director said, as authorities step up efforts to protect material cultural heritage.

Afarin Emami, director of the UNESCO-listed palace complex, said the initiative focused on the physical preservation and systematic management of textile artefacts kept in museum storage, many of which date back to the Pahlavi era.

"The project was launched to safeguard this tangible heritage, given the importance of woven textiles as one of humanity's earliest achievements in adapting to the environment," Emami told local media.

The collection includes a wide range of traditional items, such as kilims, nomadic black tents, carpets, jajims, felt pieces, saddle covers, bedding storage bags, khorjins, cushions and decorative elements used in camel trappings. These items had been stored under various classifications, including registered and non-registered holdings.

According to Emami, the project began last year with an initial focus on around 400 pieces, reflecting the significance and diversity of the collection. The process involved de-



tailed scientific procedures, from initial condition assessments to structural reinforcement where needed.

Work began with high-resolution photographic documentation and the preparation of technical identification records for each item. Specialists then conducted preliminary damage assessments before undertaking surface cleaning and dust removal on-site at the museum.

Following evaluations of the textiles' structural integrity, further conservation treatments were carried out in line with established protocols.

Emami noted that experts identified a range of issues during the process, including surface decay, staining, biological damage, tears and general wear. A key aspect of the project involved detecting and

reversing previous non-standard or inappropriate restoration work on some items.

At the conclusion of the project, all artefacts were catalogued with detailed identification tags, including information on name, date and storage location. A comprehensive report documenting the conservation process has been finalized, enabling stricter monitoring and improved preservation conditions for the collection.

Located in the heart of Tehran's historic core, the palace complex is one of the oldest in the city, originally built during the Safavid dynasty within the historic walled city. Over time, it underwent several expansions, receiving its most defining features in the 19th century, when it was designated as the royal resi-

dence and seat of power by the Qajar ruling family.

The palace complex comprises eight main palace structures, primarily used as museums, along with the eponymous gardens, a central green space surrounded by an outer wall with gates, exemplifying the architectural and artistic achievements of the Qajar era, including the integration of European motifs and styles into Persian art. It served not only as the governing base of the Qajar kings but also as a residential and recreational compound and a center of artistic production during the 19th century. Through these activities, it became a primary source and hub of Qajar art and architecture.

Moreover, the property offers a unique and rich testimony to the architectural language and decorative arts of the Qajar period, particularly reflecting the legacy of Naser al-Din Shah. The palace showcases European-inspired artistic motifs alongside Persian traditions, representing some of the earliest examples of a synthesized European-Persian style. This blend became a defining characteristic of Iranian art and architecture in the late 19th and 20th centuries, with parts of the palace complex regarded as foundational to the modern Iranian artistic movement.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Portobelo-San Lorenzo

The Fortifications on the Caribbean side of Panama: Portobelo and San Lorenzo are located along the coast of the Province of Colón. There are diverse fortification sites around the Bay of Portobelo, denominated San Fernando fortifications: Lower Battery, Upper Battery and Hilltop Stronghold; San Jerónimo Battery Fort; Santiago fortifications: Castle of Santiago de la Gloria, Battery and Hilltop Stronghold; the old Santiago Fortress; ruins of Fort Farnese; the La Trincheras site; the Buenaventura Battery; and the San Cristóbal site. Forty-three kilometers away, at the mouth of the Chagres River stands the San Lorenzo Castle (originally "San Lorenzo el Real del Chagre") with its Upper Battery as a separate structure.

The component parts of the property represent characteristic examples of military architecture

developed by the Spanish Empire in its New World territories largely between the 17th and the 18th centuries. The first plans for fortifying the entrance to the Bay of Portobelo and the mouth of the Chagres River were prepared in 1586 by Bautista Antonelli. Following his recommendations, the first fortifications in Portobelo were begun in the 1590's. As a whole, these structures comprised a defensive line to protect Portobelo's harbour and the mouth of the Chagres River, which were the Caribbean terminals of the transcontinental route across the Isthmus of Panama. The defensive system includes fortifications in different styles, some of them skilfully integrated into the natural landscape as part of its military defensive design. They were also adapted to the changing needs of defensive technologies in the course of three cen-

turies in order to protect the capital resources sent from colonial America to Spain after crossing the Isthmus of Panama. In the earliest constructions, a military style with mediaeval features prevailed, while in the eighteenth century the structures were rebuilt in the neo-classical style, which can be observed at the forts of Santiago, San Jerónimo and San Fernando, and also at San Lorenzo.

On the regional scale, these military compounds belonged to a larger defensive system, including Veracruz (Mexico), Cartagena (Colombia), and Havana (Cuba), to protect the route of commercial trade between the Americas and Spain. Portobelo, where the famous fairs were held, was one of the principal Caribbean ports and played a leading role controlling the imperial trade in the Americas.

(Source: UNESCO)

Environmental storytelling project unveiled in memory of martyred students

TEHRAN – The Department of Environment (DOE) and the Ministry of Education unveiled on Sunday an environmental storytelling project in memory of the students martyred during the US-Israeli war against the country.

DOE Head, Shina Ansari, and Education Minister Alireza Kazemi, attended the unveiling ceremony, IRNA reported.

The initiative, named after Makan Nasiri, is actually a sub-category of an earlier project that aims to train eco-friendly students, or environmental helpers. Both projects aim to enhance the students' environmental literacy.

Makan was one of the 168 school children killed by the deadly US strike on Shajareh Tayyebeh elementary school on the first day of the imposed war, February 28.

The US Tomahawk missiles left nothing of his small, fragile body, but a wrinkled blue sweater and a pair of cream-colored sneakers.

The project considers Makan an environmental helper whose mission was left incomplete after his martyrdom. Now, other students should follow his path.

Addressing the event, Hadi Kiadaliri, the deputy head of the DOE for education and public participation affairs, voiced deep regret over the martyrdom of students, saying the students with small and big dreams were part of humanity that is lost.

The pain and suffering that their families and society are going through go beyond any political, social, cultural attitudes, and any religion, he added.

The project to train eco-friendly students kicked off in the Iranian year 1375 (1996). Back then, it was limited to a few provinces. However, the project faced some challenges that highlighted the need for its revision.

In January 2023, the DOE and the Ministry of Education unveiled the logo and the poster of the national plan for the project.

Highlighting the role of education in developing values such as responsibility, the official said teaching environmental issues to children will contribute to instilling eco-friendly behaviors in



them, which will later turn into sustainable habits. Investing in children will enhance lifelong social outcomes.

If adults are responsible for current changes, children will play the same role in the future. The training needs to be constant and accessible, he added.

For his part, Kazemi noted that the integration of environmental teachings into textbooks, from preschool to high school, is on the agenda to help promote the culture of preserving the environment.

The educational courses will not be limited to students; they have the capacity to train parents and teachers, as well.

Apart from textbooks that involve formal training, the Ministry of Education focuses on informal training that would promote students' social participation in practice.

The official also announced the ministry's readiness to expand training by establishing a vocational training center to provide practical skills in the environment sector, and even utilize available capacities to organize educational courses.

Education is the key to bringing about any change in economy, culture, and social life; therefore, providing skills and training, proper behaviors will play a key role in improving the current situation, Kazemi highlighted.

The official went on to say that

students who are environmental helpers have to be introduced and lauded; they should be allowed to have a more influential role, and feel more responsible for participating in environmental conservation programs.

In February, DOE and the Education Ministry discussed the possibility of developing a national education curriculum to promote environmental responsibility and awareness among children.

Referring to the inefficiency of short-term and incoherent teaching, Mohammad Medadi, an official with the DOE, said that achieving sustainable development and boosting the country's resilience are not possible without institutionalizing an environmentally friendly attitude and lifestyle in society. So, educational approaches need to be reviewed, he added.

Environmental protection education should be taught from preschool to high school. In addition to scientific training, it should focus on ethical aspects based on cultural, religious, and social teachings.

The initiative also aims to train and empower parents and teachers, the official further noted.

Promoting environmental protection among children

In October 2025, the DOE and the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) signed a mem-

orandum of understanding to promote environmental protection among children and young adults.

The MOU was inked by Kiadaliri and Hamed Alamedi, the IIDCYA director, at the place of IIDCYA in Tehran.

The signing ceremony was concurrent with the second day of National Children's Week, which was observed nationwide from October 7 to 13, with the theme 'children, joy of life'.

In May 2025, the DOE, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, implemented an environmental project under the theme 'education is the key to change'.

The main objectives of the project were to promote environmental literacy and promote a culture of environmental responsibility among students, Mehr news agency reported.

It also aimed to share environmental knowledge of the students utilizing the peer educators' capacities; change students' attitude and promote social responsibilities; make students familiar with indigenous, climatic, and local features; as well as boost students' participation as environmental ambassadors (or eco-friendly individuals) in raising environmental awareness at school, home, and other places.

WFP releases February report on Iran

TEHRAN – The World Food Program (WFP) has released a report, expounding on activities in Iran over the month of February.

In February, WFP food assistance reached 33,317 beneficiaries, including Afghan and Iraqi refugees, through a hybrid combination of in-kind food and cash-based transfers (CBT).

Refugees are assisted with a staple food basket, which includes fortified wheat flour (a ration of 9 kg per person, reduced from 12 Kg since the month of November due to funding shortfalls).

Under CBT modality, WFP continued to provide cash assistance to support the essential living costs of vulnerable refugees. The transfer is IRR 8 million (USD 6) for households headed by men and IRR 9 million (USD 6.7) for households headed by women.

In addition, following focus group discussions conducted during the Joint Assessment Mission (December 7-18, 2025) and with the Centre for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (CAFIA) approval, since January, WFP replaced the monthly in-kind entitlement of vegetable oil – one litre per person per month – with a cash equivalent of IRR 3 million (USD 2.2) per person. This amount is now delivered directly to beneficiaries' bank cards as part of their monthly cash assistance, providing greater flexibility to meet household consumption needs.

By February, WFP Iran helped ease the financial burden associated with the gluten-free dietary needs of 57 refugee celiac patients from WFP's beneficiaries by providing them with an extra cash amount of IRR 9.7 million (USD 7.2) per person as a replace-

ment for their usual food entitlement.

Moreover, WFP supported 406 refugees with disabilities across eleven settlements, each receiving an additional monthly cash support of IRR 3 million (USD 2.2), on top of their regular aid. Initially launched in two provinces, the initiative was gradually expanded to cover settlements in Saveh, Semnan, Bani Najar, Sarvestan, Bezileh, Abazar, Rafsanjan, Bardsir, Jahrom, Meybod, and Torbat-e-Jam.

WFP's school feeding program reached 8,306 refugee students and their teachers in February, with daily snacks consisting of date bars and biscuits. Milk could not be procured due to funding shortfalls and its high cost.

WFP provided 2,618 refugee girls with a monthly cash incentive of IRR 2 million (USD 1.5) transferred to their bank accounts. This is a part of WFP Iran's efforts to promote education for refugee girls by providing them with cash for each month of regular school attendance.

To enhance the economic resilience and self-sufficiency of 364 refugees (50 percent women) in February, WFP continued its support for 26 income-generating initiatives across 18 settlements. Activities included welding, tailoring, baking, and farming, among others.

A joint vulnerability assessment (JAM) mission was conducted from December 7 to 19 in coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), covering four refugee settlements: Saveh, Abazar, Rafsanjan, and Taft.

Early findings underscored the need to



maintain assistance while improving targeting accuracy and considering increased top-ups for the most vulnerable groups in view of rising inflation and currency depreciation in the country. On February 17, WFP and UNHCR briefed the Director General of the CAFIA on the JAM initial findings and recommendations. JAM's final report will be shared by the end of March.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, an upper-middle income country with a population of over 91 million, is the largest refugee-hosting country in the world, sheltering an estimated 2.5 million forcibly displaced people according to UNHCR, and 6.1 million according to the Government of Iran, including unregistered individuals, mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq, living in urban areas.

With no viable return options, sustained assistance remains critical, particularly for over 33,000 highly vulnerable refugees living in 20 settlements nationwide.

WFP has been operating in Iran since 1962, initially for its first emergency earthquake response until 1978, and subsequently reinitiating operations to address the refugee crisis from 1987 onwards.

MMR vaccination launched in high-risk provinces



TEHRAN – The health ministry has launched the supplementary round of measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination in four high-risk provinces of Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan, and Kerman.

The supplementary immunization program kicked off on May 3 and will run for two weeks, covering 1.05 million children, IRNA quoted Mohsen Zahraei, an official with the health ministry, as saying.

The vaccine is usually administered at ages 12 and 18 months, but to boost security in high-risk areas, children aged 2-6 years will receive the vaccine. Some 95 percent of the target groups, both Iranian and foreign nationals, are expected to get vaccinated through the program, he added.

Mumps is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable viral disease caused by the mumps virus. Common symptoms include painful swelling of the jaw, fever, tiredness, appetite loss, and headache. Measles is potentially a deadly disease. Severe complications include pneumonia, diarrhea, blindness, and encephalitis (brain swelling).

The World Health Organization (WHO) verified that Iran has sustained rubella and measles elimination, Alireza Raeisi, an official with the health ministry, said in February.

"Iran, Oman, and Bahrain are the only countries in the region that have received the verification," IRNA quoted Raeisi as saying.

The measles vaccination program in Iran started in 1984, when 34 percent of the population was vaccinated in the first year and 90 to 95 percent of the population after 6 years. Also in 2003, 33 million people were vaccinated with a national program to eradicate measles in the country.

The official described it as a great achievement of the health system, saying that many European countries have lost WHO's measles-free status. Measles is still prevalent in West Asia, particularly in the country's eastern neighbours, such as Turkey, Raeisi added.

This achievement is the result of coordinated

planning, widespread vaccination, epidemiologic surveillance, and comprehensive participation of the country's healthcare system. It is a turning point in improving public health, which will strengthen Iran's position in achieving goals at the regional and international levels.

High vaccination coverage in Iran

High vaccination coverage in Iran is considered one of the most important accomplishments of the country's health system, which has led to the control and elimination of many infectious diseases and to the establishment of collective immunity, Mehr news agency quoted Raeisi as saying.

However, regional developments and population shifts underscore the need to maintain immunization programs more than ever, he added.

The official made the remarks on the occasion of the World Immunization Program, being held from April 24 to 30 under the theme 'For every generation, vaccines work'.

Elaborating on the country's health system's achievements, the official said during the 40-day US-Israeli war, a total of 164,000 children received their needed vaccinations.

Despite all restrictions and difficult situations of the imposed war, the health ministry did not fail to provide public health services, which highlights the dedication, tireless efforts, and unwavering commitment of health staff.

The national vaccination program in Iran includes 13 vaccines, and the country is following developed countries with an average of 17 vaccines in their national vaccination programs, Mostafa Qanei, the secretary general of the Biotechnology Development Headquarters, said in January.

Knowledge-based companies are operating to produce the four vaccines that are not included in the national vaccination program, he added.

Uterus, influenza, meningococcus and pneumococcal conjugate are the four vaccines that have not been produced domestically.

UNICEF supporting essential health services for children in Iran

TEHRAN – The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is supporting efforts to restore access to essential health services for children and families in Iran.

In coordination with the Ministry of Health, 2 mobile health units, 8 primary healthcare (PHC) tents, and 81 emergency primary healthcare kits have been deployed.

Additional supplies—including 2 more PHC tents and 131 emergency kits—are being delivered, helping reach at least 226,000 people. UNICEF is also scaling up its psychosocial support to children impacted by the escalation, the UNICEF website reported in March.

Children must be protected and have access to the care they urgently need.

In January, UNICEF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, organized an event to ensure that medical settings serve as a strong shield for children at risk and to strengthen integrated child protection services as the first step toward activating Child Protection Committees within hospitals.

Supported by the European Union, the event brought together directors, nurses, and social workers from 22 pediatric hospitals, alongside experts from the State Welfare Organization.

Since 2023, UNICEF and MoHME have been working hand-in-hand to empower social workers through specialized training and protocols. By moving beyond just physical treatment to holistic protection, we are creating a

world where hospitals are not just places of healing, but sanctuaries of safety.

Looking ahead, UNICEF will continue to launch innovative activities to maintain this momentum, ensuring that the protection of every child remains at the heart of the healthcare system.

In this line, the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and UNICEF have enhanced cooperation to provide psychosocial support for children during emergencies.

They aim to provide immediate, safe, and protective environments for children affected by crises, the UNICEF website reported in December 2025.

The collaboration focuses on rapidly deploying high-quality tents and essential equipment to establish Child-Friendly Spaces (CFSs) as a crucial Rapid Response mechanism.

In February, the head of the Welfare Organization, Javad Hosseini, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) ad interim Representative in Iran, Monika Oledzka Nielsen, explored the potential to expand cooperation, particularly regarding children aged below 18.

During a meeting in Tehran, Nielsen said the two organizations have so far held two meetings to prioritize issues based on assessments made by the Welfare Organization, Mehr news agency reported.

The core area of collaboration focuses on improving children's rights, such as child labor and street children, she noted.



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MAY 4, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Do not waste water even if you were at a running stream.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 18:13 Dawn: 03:34 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 05:08 (tomorrow)

Hot Docs: Marjolein Busstra's "House of Hope" Palestinian resistance pic takes top jury prize

Marjolein Busstra's "House of Hope," a film about a Palestinian couple teaching young students non-violent resistance in an elementary school in the occupied West Bank, picked up the best international feature documentary prize at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival on Friday night.

The top jury prize win at the festival means Busstra's film, a Palestine-Netherlands co-production that world premiered at IDFA in Amsterdam, will qualify for consideration in the best documentary feature category at the Academy Awards. The award also comes with a \$10,000 cash prize (courtesy of Donner Canadian Foundation).

"A powerful and unsentimental film that bears witness to a family-run Waldorf school in the West Bank and its profound commitment to nurturing the humanity of children," writes the jury comprised of Robyn Citizen, Daniela Michel, and Lina Rodriguez. "For its clear-eyed portrait of educators whose quiet everyday resilience stubbornly insists on hope under the shadow of occupation and genocide, the jury enthusiastically presents Marjolein Busstra with the Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary award for 'House of Hope'."

Other winners at Hot Docs include the best Canadian feature documentary prize going to "Saigon Story: Two Shootings in the Forest Kingdom," a film about two families connected by Eddie Adam's iconic photo from Oscar-nominated director Kim Nguyen.

The award is accompanied by a \$10,000 cash prize (courtesy of Telefilm Canada). Hot Docs hosted the world premiere for "Saigon Story."

The jury, comprised of Avril Benoît, Jason Gorber, and Yiqian Zhang, writes, "For this film's illuminating look at the story behind an iconic image and the city where it was captured, its compelling analysis of the lasting effects of a conflict from more than



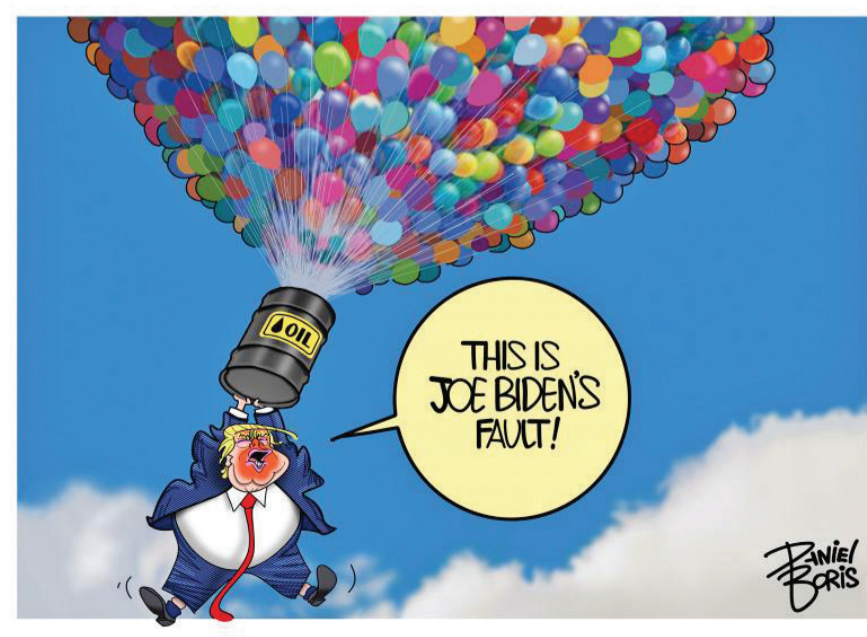
a half century ago, and its deep dive into the complex historical, political and emotional aspects that expand well beyond the frame of one of the most haunting moments ever captured on film, the Jury presents the Hot Docs Best Canadian Feature Documentary award to Kim Nguyen's 'Saigon Story: Two Shootings in the Forest Kingdom.'

And the best emerging international filmmaker trophy went to "Paikar" director Dawood Hilmandi, another film from the Netherlands where the filmmaker from exile in Amsterdam reflects on life as a refugee after having to flee Afghanistan.

Other winners include the special jury prize for a Canadian feature documentary going to "Banchi Hanuse for Ceremony," a film about an indigenous community in Canada's north that earned an audience prize at SXSW, while the special jury prize for an international feature documentary went to "Heidrun Holzfeind, for The 49th Year," where an anarchist imprisoned since 1980 reflects on his radical past via letters.

Elsewhere, the best social impact documentary trophy went to directors Chul Young Cho, Shin Wan Kim and Jong Woo Kim for "The Seoul Guardians," a film from South Korea set around protests over martial law being declared in 2024 and during a night of chaos collective citizen resistance.

Cartoon of Day



Up!
Cartoonist: Daniel Boris from the US

Filming of new documentary about Pasteur Institute of Iran underway

TEHRAN – The Pasteur Institute of Iran, its history, scientific standing, and current status are the subject of a new documentary, which is currently in the filming stage.

Documentary filmmaker Abdol-sattar Kakaei is making the film about the institute, which is one of the most prominent members of the global Pasteur Network, playing a role in vaccine production in addition to its healthcare services, Honaronline reported.

"The Pasteur Institute of Iran is a leading center for scientific research and the production of antiviral vaccines in West Asia, ranking among the top five centers in the global Pasteur Network. There are 32 Pasteur institutes worldwide, all established under the umbrella of the Pasteur Institute of France, with Louis Pasteur being the founder," Kakaei explained.

"The Iranian branch of this institution operates with outstanding features and is among the most significant Pasteur representatives. While other branches primarily offer services, Iran, due to the sanctions, is active not only in healthcare but also in vaccine production," he added.

"The documentary is about the Pasteur Institute and its history, a site that was initially part of the endowment lands of a Qajar-era figure and was damaged last month during the Ramadan War bombings by the US and Israel," Kakaei noted.

Regarding the filming locations, the filmmaker said: "The Pasteur Institute of Iran has two sites in Tehran, and filming has taken place at them. He noted that the film is in its shooting phase, with editing being done simultaneously."

"Most people have only heard the name of the institution but are unaware of its actual activities and



standing in the region. This institution has played a significant role in the scientific and health sectors, both in the past and present, and is considered one of the most important and prominent scientific bodies in West Asia," the director underlined.

Explaining his objective in making this documentary, Kakaei said: "I seek to inform the public that Iran possesses a scientific center of such importance and prominence, a center that is self-sufficient in production, free from import dependency, and produces many vaccines domestically."

The new film by Kakaei is part of the "Ramadan War" documentary series. The Pasteur Institute of Iran is a research, production, service, scientific, and educational institution founded 102 years ago. During the Ramadan War (from February 28 to April 8), the institute and its infrastructure were targeted and damaged in attacks by Israel and the United States on Iran.

The Pasteur Institute of Iran is

one of the oldest and most prominent research and public health centers in Iran and West Asia. For more than a century, it has made great strides in preventing and controlling infectious diseases, gaining significant credibility and reputation both nationally and internationally.

With a total staff of more than 1,300 and five branches across the country, the institute is a leading facility in the development and manufacturing of vaccines, biopharmaceuticals, and diagnostic kits in Iran. It also functions as a major medical research hub while providing specialized health services through diagnostic laboratory services and National Reference Laboratories to control infectious diseases in Iran and neighboring countries.

Moreover, the institute offers a diverse range of Ph.D. programs and educational initiatives covering medical and pharmaceutical biotechnology, microbiology, and systems biology.

Over the past century, it has built an essential foundation for the development of an investigative, laboratory-based biomedical culture in Iran, and its influence and contributions have spread far beyond the boundaries of its original mandate.

The institute was targeted by the US and Israel three times during the Ramadan War, causing significant damage to some departments including the cell bank, as well as malaria, clinical, and biotechnology research centers.

Currently, the institute's specialized and production services to the national health system including vaccination services, diagnostic laboratory services, and the distribution of diagnostic kits across the public health laboratory network continue non-stop.

The reconstruction of the Pasteur Institute would begin soon to ensure no disruption in the services provided by the institute.

Iranian Artists Forum screens award-winning documentary "Microcosmos"

TEHRAN – The Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran screened the award-winning documentary "Microcosmos" on Sunday.

Written and directed by Claude Nuridsany and Marie Perennou and produced by Jacques Perrin, the 1996 documentary is an international co-production of France, Switzerland, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

"Microcosmos" showcases detailed interactions between insects and other small invertebrates, and features music by Bruno Coulais.

Unlike a number of other nature documentaries, the movie does not feature narration for most of its runtime, incorporating only two brief passages of narration.

The 80-minute film was screened out of competition at the 1996 Cannes Film Festival. In the same year, it was a multiple prize winner at the French Academy of Cinema Award, known as Cesar Awards, where it was

nominated in eight categories and won five including the best cinematography, editing, music, sound, and producer awards.

It may appear tiny to the human eye, but there is no denying that the insect kingdom, as captured by the filmmakers behind this documentary, is as dramatic, action-packed, and beautiful as any other.

Utilizing special macroscopic photographic techniques, the filmmakers created a fascinating and visually spectacular look at the hidden worlds in the life cycle of an ordinary meadow in France.

When seen through the lens of Nuridsany and Perennou's cameras, insects become gigantic beasts, blades of grass turn into towering monuments, and raindrops form puddles that resemble vast oceans.

The filmmakers find humor, drama, and beauty in the lives of these tiny flora and fauna as caterpillars transform themselves into



butterflies, beetles struggle with their day's foraging, and snails reproduce their species.

Lake Chitgar hosts grand musical tribute to the Persian Gulf

TEHRAN– In a celebration of Persian Gulf National Day on Friday, Lake Chitgar, an artificial and recreational body of water in northwestern Tehran, hosted a grand artistic event titled "Persian Gulf Passage".

The event, which drew a massive crowd of enthusiasts, featured an impressive assembly of over 50 music groups and more than 200 individual performers. The gathering aimed to honor the historical and cultural significance of the Persian Gulf through the universal language of music, Mehr reported.

The lakeside venue was transformed into an open-air stage where musicians showcased a rich tapestry of Iranian sonic heritage, the report added.

The repertoire spanned a wide array of genres, including Pop, Rock, and Traditional Irani-

an music.

A highlight of the evening was the extensive representation of Iran's ethnic diversity. Melodies from various regions—including Turkish, Lori, Kurdish, Southern, Mazandarani, Gilaki, and Khorasani tunes—resonated across the water, catering to a broad spectrum of musical tastes and age groups.

Organizers noted that the performers utilized over 40 different types of musical instruments, creating a unique and immersive atmosphere that blended ancient traditions with contemporary sounds.

observed annually on the Ordibehesht 10 (April 30), Persian Gulf National Day serves as a symbol of Iranian identity, sovereignty, and historical continuity. This significant date marks the anniversary of the success-



ful 1622 campaign when Iranian forces, under the leadership of Shah Abbas I, expelled the Portuguese military from the Strait of Hormuz, reclaiming the strategic waters.

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