

Patriots in the Streets for +70 Nights

Leader issues new directives in meeting with Iran's top commander

TEHRAN – In a meeting with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Mojtaba Khamenei, the Commander of Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, Major General Ali Abdollahi, presented a comprehensive report on the readiness of the Armed Forces.

The report covered the operational status of the Army, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Law Enforcement Forces, border guards, the Ministry of Defense, and the Basij volunteer forces. ▶Page 2

Iran submits official response to latest US proposal to end war

TEHRAN – Islamic Republic has submitted its official reply to the latest US proposal aimed at reaching a deal that would allow a permanent end to the US-Israeli war against Iran, a source familiar with the matter confirmed on Sunday. No details about Iran's response have been released so far.

The source told Tasnim that, at the current stage, negotiations are focused exclusively on the cessation of hostilities.

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei previously stated: "For now, we have decided to focus on ending the war, because this issue is a matter of concern for the entire region, for our nation, and for the international community." Pakistan brokered a ceasefire between Tehran and Washington on April 8, halting nearly 40 days of joint US-Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic. Follow-up talks were held in Islamabad days later but failed to produce a breakthrough.

President Pezeshkian: Iran will never surrender to the enemy

TEHRAN – President Masoud Pezeshkian said talks with the United States are aimed at preserving national interests from a position of power.

"The goal is to realize the rights of the Iranian people and defend national interests with authority," Pezeshkian said on Sunday at a meeting on post-war reconstruction.

He stressed that negotiations with Washington do not amount to "surrendering to the enemy."

Pezeshkian also stressed the importance of maintaining national unity, strengthening public trust, and ensuring continued public participation in the reconstruction process.

The US and Israel launched a war on Iran on February 28. An April 8 ceasefire between Tehran and Washington paused the war. Nonetheless, the two sides have yet to reach a deal to bring a permanent end to the conflict. ▶Page 2

Iran dismantles two Mossad-linked terrorist cells, arrests spy

TEHRAN – Iran's Intelligence Ministry has announced the dismantling of two terrorist cells linked to Israel's Mossad, as well as the arrest of an agent attempting to smuggle classified military intelligence abroad.

According to a detailed statement released by the Ministry on Sunday, the first operational cell consisted of four members active in West Azerbaijan and Tehran provinces. The team had received funding from Mossad in several stages and was planning terrorist operations against sensitive centers and government buildings, in addition to a specific assassination plot targeting an individual in Tehran.

When security forces confronted the cell, the operatives put up armed resistance. In the ensuing clash, one agent was killed and the other three were arrested.

The second Mossad-affiliated cell was operating in Kerman and Alborz provinces. ▶Page 2

Misjudged war underestimated Iran's technological sophistication: Jeffrey Sachs

TEHRAN – The only path that the United States seems to be taking in its misjudged war on Iran "is a retreat," the internationally famous Columbia University Professor Jeffrey Sachs and co-writer Sybil Fares say.

Writing an article on the Al Jazeera website on May 9, Sachs and Fares, advisor on the Middle East and Africa, believe the joint aggression on Iran "was a war of whim" as the U.S. underlying premise was "hegemony" and Israel was trying to establish "a regional dominance that it will never have."

The writers cite several reasons that clarify America's disastrous miscalculations, including underestimating Iran's technological sophistication, in starting the war that ended in the Islamic Republic's successes.

The text of the article headlined "The war on Iran will likely end in American retreat" is given below with a few edits:

The war against Iran that the United States and Israel launched on February 28, 2026, will likely end in an American retreat. The United States cannot continue the war without producing disastrous consequences.

Netanyahu between war fallout and internal crises

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – As war repercussions persist and multiple fronts remain open, the Israeli regime has effectively entered election mode.

Despite the ongoing war repercussions and several fronts remaining open or pending, internal dynamics indicate that parties across the political spectrum have firmly entered an election atmosphere.

War, which dominated public discourse for months, is no longer the sole defining factor of the domestic political mood, though it remains highly influential. The debate is gradually turning toward the upcoming elections, Netanyahu's fate, and the shape of his party that the ballot box might produce.

At the heart of this scene, the position of prime minister and Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu dominates political and media discussion. He remains the figure who defines the regime's sharp political divide with a simple formula, at first glance: for or against Netanyahu.

Handala's digital storm topples US-Israeli cyber supremacy

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – For decades, the U.S. and Israel have sold the image of their cyber defenses as an absolute fortress, a multi-billion-dollar architecture designed to ensure that while American and Israeli forces struck the region, they themselves would remain untouched behind layers of code.

That illusion has evaporated. At the center stands Handala, a hacking collective named for Najji al-Ali's iconic refugee child who turns his back on an unjust world. Today, that child is fighting.

Since the commencement of the recent U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, Handala has evolved into a strategic front of the Axis of Resistance, proving that empires built on technological hubris are far more fragile than their marketing suggests.

Blood debts and the Stryker wipeout

When American-made munitions turned an Iranian elementary school in Minab into a graveyard, killing 120 children and dozens of school staff in a single afternoon, the Resistance's retaliation extended far beyond the front lines. They ensured the cost was also extracted in the West's most precious currencies: digital sovereignty and military intelligence.

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Tourism minister unveils post-war revitalization plan

TEHRAN – Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, has announced a strategic roadmap to boost Iran's tourism sector following the conclusion of the recent US-Israeli attack on the country.

Speaking on the sidelines of a memorial service for martyr Ali Larijani and his son at Imam Sadeq (AS) Mosque in Tehran on Saturday, Salehi-Amiri revealed that 149 historical sites have been identified as damaged so far due to foreign strikes. "Some of these sites are located within military zones, and a full assessment is currently pending safer access," he stated. Initial estimates place the financial damage at approximately \$7.5 million. ▶Page 6



'We stand with Iran:' Powerful display of support outside US embassy in Tokyo

TEHRAN – In a moving display of international solidarity, a group of Japanese citizens gathered peacefully in Tokyo near the U.S. Embassy on Sunday, waving Iranian flags and holding signs declaring "We Stand with Iran."

In the gathering that also included elderly Japanese citizens, protestors displayed large posters featuring portraits of the martyred children killed in the U.S. military strike on the Shajareh Tayyebeh Elementary School in Minab.

The heartfelt demonstration highlights growing global opposition to the campaign of aggression against Iran and unwavering support for the Iranian people's resilience and dignity.

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

American calculations failed

Hamshahri analyzed why US strategic calculations failed in the Ramadan War. According to the article, more than two months after the conflict began, international analysts believe Washington has not achieved its initial goals. It has not brought about a change of government in Tehran and now faces heavy military, economic, and political costs that may force a retreat. The article states that the US expected internal collapse in Iran, followed by the rise of a pro-Western government. It assumed sanctions had severely weakened Iran, while in reality, the pressure contributed to strengthening domestic capabilities. According to the article, the war was not based on genuine security needs but on the illusion of preserving US hegemony and Israeli regional dominance. Now, Iran is expected to gain greater control over vital global energy routes. Its military capability and deterrence credibility have increased, and regional countries are likely to take Iran's power more seriously.

Jam-e-Jam: Saudi Arabia and Kuwait did not support the US in "Project Freedom"

Jam-e-Jam wrote that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, fearing Iranian missiles and drones, restricted US access to their bases along the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. This decision stemmed from serious security concerns and doubts about whether the US would fully protect them from Iranian retaliation. Operationally and strategically, the article argues, "Project Freedom" lacked concentration of forces and security. Attempting a major operation without full consent from key allies led to dispersed forces and weakened combat capability across multiple fronts. This increased the risk of escalation without achieving decisive operational advantage, allowing Iran to raise the cost for the US through asymmetric tactics — ballistic missiles, drones, and naval mines. Ultimately, the failure to anticipate political-military reactions from allies and the absence of a backup plan turned the project into a high-risk, unstable operation that was doomed to suspension or limited failure from the start.

Iran condemns Bahrain's mass citizenship revocations as 'collective punishment'



TEHRAN — Iran's High Council for Human Rights (HCHR) has strongly condemned Bahrain's decision to revoke the citizenship of 69 Bahraini nationals, describing the move as illegal, arbitrary, and a clear violation of human rights principles.

In a statement released on Sunday, the HCHR said the measure amounted to "collective punishment" and an "extrajudicial penalty" that cannot be justified under any civilized legal system.

According to the statement, those stripped of citizenship include clerics, eulogists, social activists, women, men, and even children and infants — all deprived of their nationality without judicial procedures, legal investigations, or court rulings, and solely based on an order issued by the Bahraini king.

Iran's top rights body stressed that the right to nationality is a fundamental right recognized under international law, citing Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality." It added that Bahrain's action, particularly the inclusion of children and infants, violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The HCHR also criticized 'repeated and unfounded accusations of support for Iran or espionage for foreign entities,' saying such

Farhikhtegan: The era of American secrecy has ended

Farhikhtegan pointed to what it described as the collapse of the US military's powerful image. According to the article, two months after the start of the regional war, American media such as The Washington Post now say the United States is no longer in an offensive position but is instead focused on defending its bases. After sustaining high costs and losing parts of its missile stockpile in battles with Iran, some US bases have reportedly become unusable or inaccessible. The article argues that this series of setbacks, as narrated by an American outlet, shows that the US has not only failed to overcome its political and economic challenges through military power but is now facing an even greater problem. The once-dominant image of the US military has, in their view, collapsed, and this defeat did not occur in a confrontation with major global powers like Russia or China, but with a country that the US president had claimed could be defeated in just three days.

Arman-e-Melli: Military tension or diplomacy

Arman-e-Melli wrote that developments between Iran and the United States continue under intense pressure, with each side periodically taking actions or making statements that influence the situation. Iran and the US remain in a fragile ceasefire, and some military activity is still visible in the Persian Gulf, yet discussions about possible negotiations and agreements continue. Because of this dual dynamic, the article argues, it is impossible to say with certainty which direction events will ultimately take. Diplomatic efforts are still underway between the two countries through mediators. Despite the recent exchange of fire on Thursday night, attempts to reduce tensions continue. The article concludes that Iranians never bow to pressure, but diplomacy is often the first casualty in such confrontations.

claims are being used as a pretext to suppress opposition voices in Bahrain.

The headquarters called on UN human rights bodies, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to officially condemn Bahrain's actions and demand the restoration of citizenship to all affected individuals, especially children and infants.

On April 27, Bahrain's Ministry of Interior announced that it had revoked the citizenship of 69 people, accusing them of sympathizing with Iran and "colluding with foreign entities." The move came as Iran was defending itself in the war with the United States and Israel, which began on February 28.

Separately, regional tensions have also affected other nations. According to The New York Times, the UAE has launched a large-scale expulsion of thousands of Pakistani workers, particularly Shiite Pakistanis, amid a rift over Pakistan's mediation between the US and Iran. Pakistani Shiite religious leaders estimate that thousands have been deported from the UAE since mid-April. The Emirates appears upset that Pakistan has failed to condemn Iranian strikes on Emirati territory more forcefully while simultaneously brokering peace between Washington and Tehran.

Leader issues new directives in meeting with Iran's top commander

TEHRAN — In a meeting with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Mojtaba Khamenei, the Commander of Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, Major General Ali Abdollahi, presented a comprehensive report on the readiness of the Armed Forces.

The report covered the operational status of the Army, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Law Enforcement Forces, border guards, the Ministry of Defense, and the Basij volunteer forces.

Major General Abdollahi stated that all Iranian forces are at a high level of preparedness in terms of combat morale, defensive and offensive readiness, strategic planning, and the nec-



essary equipment and weaponry to counter hostile actions by American and Zionist enemies.

He warned that any strategic miscalculation, aggression, or attack by adversaries would be met with a swift, powerful, and

decisive response.

The top commander also conveyed assurances on behalf of the Armed Forces to the Leader, saying they remain fully committed to following his orders and will defend, to their last

breath, the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, Iran's territory, sovereignty, national interests, and the proud Iranian nation.

During the meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei expressed appreciation for the country's courageous and capable Armed Forces. Referring to his previous guidance during the war of aggression imposed by the US and the Israeli regime, the Leader noted that it had led—by divine grace—to victories and prevented enemies from achieving their evil objectives.

The Leader also issued new, forward-looking directives to ensure the continuation of operations and to reinforce a firm and effective response to any external threat.

Iranian army warns of 'surprising options' against any future aggression

TEHRAN— The Iranian Army spokesperson, Brigadier General Mohammad Akraminia, has warned that Iran has "surprising options" prepared for any future act of aggression, stating that enemies making another "miscalculation" against the country would face responses beyond their expectations.

In an interview published on Sunday, as a ceasefire remains in place following the 40-day US-Israeli war on Iran that began on February 28, Akraminia said: "We warn the enemy that if they once again commit aggression and fall into another miscalculation, they will certainly face other surprising options."

He noted that these options would involve

more advanced military equipment, new methods of warfare, and—most importantly—new arenas of conflict that the enemy has neither predicted nor included in its military planning.

The spokesperson added that none of the enemy's objectives were achieved during the war. He said the enemy had expected social unrest and the collapse of the political system through a "shock operation," but instead, people took to the streets in support of national unity.

Akraminia also stated that the US claim about a pilot rescue mission was largely a "deception operation," arguing that the main objective was likely the theft of Iran's enriched uranium. He said more than 50 US



aircraft participated, but the mission failed.

"Israel is unable to confront Iran without direct US support, and despite the mobilization of American naval, aerial, and electronic warfare capabilities, the enemies failed to achieve their objectives," he added.

Iran dismantles two Mossad-linked terrorist cells, arrests spy

TEHRAN — Iran's Intelligence Ministry has announced the dismantling of two terrorist cells linked to Israel's Mossad, as well as the arrest of an agent attempting to smuggle classified military intelligence abroad.

According to a detailed statement released by the Ministry on Sunday, the first operational cell consisted of four members active in West Azerbaijan and Tehran provinces. The team had received funding from Mossad in several stages and was planning terrorist operations against sensitive centers and government buildings, in addition to a specific assassination plot targeting an individual in Tehran.

When security forces confront-

ed the cell, the operatives put up armed resistance. In the ensuing clash, one agent was killed and the other three were arrested.

The second Mossad-affiliated cell was operating in Kerman and Alborz provinces. Intelligence agencies identified the group while they were conducting reconnaissance for a planned attack against Iranian military personnel. All three members of this cell were arrested before they could carry out any hostile action.

Security forces seized a significant cache of weapons and espionage equipment from the hideout of the second cell. The confiscated items included three drones with a dedicated transport vehicle, three semi-automatic pistols with sup-



pressors, one Winchester rifle, one scoped rifle, large quantities of ammunition, several long-range handheld and vehicle-mounted two-way radios, Starlink receiver devices, and bulletproof vests.

In a separate operation in northern Iran, an individual identi-

fied as "Masoud" was arrested for attempting to send classified information about a military center to foreign countries.

The Intelligence Ministry confirmed that all hostile plots were neutralized before any attacks could be executed.

Iran envoy proposes China as guarantor for potential US deal

TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to China Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli has suggested that Beijing act as a guarantor of a potential deal between Tehran and Washington.

Rahmani Fazli made the comment in a post on X on Sunday, hours after the IRNA news agency said Iran had submitted its reply to the latest US proposal for reaching a deal that would allow a permanent end to the US-Israeli war. A ceasefire in April paused the conflict that initially began on February 28. Iran says Washington's "excessive, unrealistic and maximalist" demands have so far hampered mediation efforts.

When security forces confront-



"Any potential agreement must be backed by guarantees from major powers and formally presented to the United Nations Secu-

rity Council," the Iranian ambassador said in his X message. He added, "China and Russia are two major and influential powers. Given the position China holds for Iran and other countries in the Persian Gulf region, Beijing can act as a guarantor of any such agreement."

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi made an official visit to China last week. In his meetings with senior Chinese officials, Araghchi said Iran considers China a trustworthy and strategic partner and keeps Beijing informed about negotiations with the US.

Iran holds 'upper hand,' delivers 'decisive response' to aggression: Military spokesman

TEHRAN — Iranian Armed Forces spokesperson Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi said on Sunday that Iran retains the initiative in the region despite US provocations and is prepared to deliver a decisive response to any aggression.

"Despite US provocations, the initiative remains in the hands of the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the combat capabilities of Iranian fighters are at a very high level," he said.

He also warned Iran's neighbors in the Persian Gulf against enabling US military actions in the region, stressing that any country taking hostile steps against Iran would face a firm and decisive response from its armed forces.

During the late hours of Thursday, the US military struck two

Iranian oil tankers near the port of Jask and the Strait of Hormuz, and carried out assaults on several coastal areas overlooking the strategic waterway.

The attacks were met with a strong response by the Iranian military.

The United States and Israel launched a war on Iran on February 28. In the early hours of the aggression, Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and several high-ranking military commanders were martyred.

Iranian Armed Forces carried out 100 waves of counterattacks during 39 days of war, targeting US and Israeli military assets and inflicting as significant damage on the enemies.

A Pakistan-mediated two-



week ceasefire was brokered on April 8, enabling negotiations in Islamabad, where Iran presented a ten-point proposal calling for the withdrawal of US troops and the lifting of sanctions. Despite 21 hours of intensive talks on April 11 and 12, the Iranian delegation

returned to Tehran without an agreement, citing deep mistrust over Washington's willingness to fulfill its commitments. Iran says any deal must include guarantees of non-aggression, the lifting of the US naval blockade on Iranian ports among other conditions.

TEHRAN - Iranians across the country continue holding nightly rallies for more than 70 consecutive days, forming a sustained nationwide expression of public unity and a historic moment of cohesion and solidarity. The gatherings, held in cities, towns, and smaller communities throughout Iran, have become a regular feature of public life in the aftermath of the joint US-Israeli aggression that initially began on February 28.

Since the April 8 ceasefire, which halted active hostilities, the public presence in the streets has not diminished. Instead, it has remained steady and widespread, with citizens from all walks of life participating in coordinated yet largely spontaneous gatherings. Men and women, families, students, and workers attend side by side, reflecting a broad social spectrum that spans different regions, professions, and age groups.

Unwavering support for the Islamic Republic

A central characteristic of these rallies is the strong emphasis on national unity and support for the Islamic Republic. Participants frequently frame their presence as an expression of solidarity with the state during a sensitive regional period. Despite the diversity of political and ideological perspectives in Iranian society, many attendees say the rallies reflect a shared commitment to national sovereignty and independence in the face of external pressure.

President Pezeshkian: Iran will never surrender to the enemy

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian said talks with the United States are aimed at preserving national interests from a position of power.

"The goal is to realize the rights of the Iranian people and defend national interests with authority," Pezeshkian said on Sunday at a meeting on post-war reconstruction.

He stressed that negotiations with Washington do not amount to "surrendering to the enemy."

Pezeshkian also stressed the importance of maintaining national unity, strengthening public trust, and ensuring continued public participation in the reconstruction process.

The US and Israel launched a war on Iran on February 28. An April 8 ceasefire between Tehran and Wash-



Across the country, Iranian flags are prominently displayed, often accompanied by banners and placards carrying slogans rejecting foreign intervention and expressing opposition to the United States and Israel. The symbolic use of national imagery is reinforced by the visible presence of families, women, and youth, creating a collective atmosphere that blends civic participation with political expression.

One of the most notable aspects of the gatherings is their spontaneous and decentralized nature. Rather than being centrally organized, the rallies are widely described as self-initiated, with local communities coordinating participation through informal networks. This grassroots character is frequently highlighted by participants as a reflection of genuine public sentiment rather than institutional direction.

Women's participation has been particularly prominent,

with many attending alongside family members. Youth involvement is also a defining feature, as teenagers and young adults regularly join the nightly events in large numbers. The intergenerational nature of the gatherings has contributed to their sustained continuity, with many participants describing them as both social and national in character.

In cities such as Tehran and others, the rallies often extend across major streets and public squares, where chants, collective slogans, and cultural expressions are shared in a structured yet fluid environment. The repeated and continuous nature of these gatherings—now surpassing 70 nights—has itself become a key symbol of endurance and public engagement.

'JANFADA' campaign in the spotlight

Alongside the street mobilization, the national "JANFADA" ("Sacrificing Life") campaign has also been launched as a broader

civic initiative. It is a voluntary nationwide initiative in which citizens register to express readiness to defend the country and support national needs. The campaign is presented as a symbol of public solidarity, patriotism, and unity.

According to campaign spokesperson Sasan Zare, more than 31 million people have registered, a figure that has drawn attention due to its scale relative to Iran's population, which is about 90 million.

Zare said participants include individuals across a wide age range, from teenagers to older adults, with representation from both men and women. He noted that many registrants have expressed willingness to contribute in different capacities, including service-oriented, educational, and organizational roles.

Overall, the continuation of nightly rallies, alongside the large-scale participation in the "JANFADA" campaign, reflects a society that remains actively present in public life, with citizens choosing collective visibility as a form of expression in a sensitive regional environment. While the rallies highlight street-level demonstrations of unity, the registration drive adds another dimension of organized participation, illustrating how public sentiment is being translated into broader social involvement across different sectors of the population.

ington paused the war. Nonetheless, the two sides have yet to reach a deal to bring a permanent end to the conflict.

In response to the US-Israel aggression, Iran dealt severe blows to US bases in the Persian Gulf region in addition to hitting strategic targets inside Israel. Iran has also asserted full control over the Strait of Hormuz. Iran says it is open to diplomacy, but the US must accept its conditions, which include guarantees of non-aggression, lifting a US blockade on Iranian ports that was imposed in mid-April, recognizing its peaceful nuclear rights, and lifting illegal sanctions.

President Donald Trump claims that Iran wants a deal because the US military has destroyed Iran's military capabilities. Such claims have been rejected by US media reports. According to a recent report by The



Washington Post, a confidential CIA analysis delivered to administration policymakers concludes Iran retains significant ballistic missile capabilities despite weeks of intense US and Israeli bombardment. Citing a US official, the report said, Iran retains about 75 percent of its prewar inventory of mobile launchers and

roughly 70 percent of its prewar missile stockpiles. The official added that there is evidence Iran has been able to recover and reopen almost all of its underground storage facilities, repair some damaged missiles, and even assemble new missiles that were nearly complete when the war began.

LATETS NEWS

challenges and fostering stability.

■ IRGC missiles locked on enemy targets: commander

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force Brigadier General Majid Mousavi said the force's missiles and drones have been locked onto enemy targets and are awaiting the order to fire.

In a message released on Saturday night, Brigadier General Mousavi stressed, "The (IRGC) Aerospace Force's missiles and drones have been locked onto American targets in the region and the vessels of the aggressor enemy."

"We are awaiting the order to fire," he added.

■ Macron: France never considered sending warships to Strait of Hormuz

French President Emmanuel Macron has stated that France never considered deploying warships to the Strait of Hormuz, clarifying Paris's position amid ongoing regional tensions.

■ ICRC president: Deliberate threats against civilians 'indefensible'

The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, said deliberate threats against civilians — in rhetoric and action — are "indefensible, inhumane, and devastating."

In an exclusive interview with IRNA, she warned against normalizing "limitless war" and urged the protection of civilians and vital infrastructure.

Her remarks come after US-Israeli attacks on Iran, including a strike on a school in Minab that martyred over 120 children.

■ Iranian deputy FM: 'We will not allow any nation to interfere in Hormuz security'

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister warned that Tehran will not allow any country to interfere in the security of the Strait of Hormuz, urging France and Britain not to further complicate the situation.

■ Iran's new ambassador to Vietnam departs for mission

Akbar Ghasemi, the newly appointed ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Vietnam, met with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi before departing for his mission.

During the meeting, Foreign Minister Araghchi emphasized the need to further expand and strengthen bilateral relations, particularly in the political, economic, trade, tourism, and other relevant sectors.

■ 'They pushed us out of the region': US author tells Piers Morgan

Scott Horton, a prominent American author specializing in US foreign policy and America's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, made striking admissions about Iran's strategic dominance during an interview with Piers Morgan.

"They pushed us out of the region. They called our bluff," Horton told Morgan.

He further stated: "The Iranians shut down all our bases in the region. Our aircraft carriers dare not approach the region — they must maintain a distance of two thousand kilometers."

Horton is the author of several books on US foreign policy, particularly focusing on American military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

■ Iran consulate: 'Viviana will learn her mother's role in Minab massacre and be filled with shame'

The Consulate General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Mazar-e-Sharif has issued a sharp response to White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt following her social media post celebrating the birth of her daughter, Viviana.

The Consulate retweeted Leavitt's photo with her newborn alongside a poster of schoolchildren martyred in the US bombing of a school in Minab, southern Iran.

In its statement, the Consulate wrote:

"Viviana will eventually find out who her mother truly is and will be filled with shame. She'll learn of her mother's involvement in the massacre of children in Iran and Minab. The word 'Mother' is sacred; not everyone is worthy of being called one."

The US-Israeli attack on the Minab school on February 28 martyred over 120 children

■ Iranian, Qatari FMs discuss regional developments in phone call

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi and his Qatari counterpart, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, held a phone conversation to discuss the latest regional situation.

During the call, Araghchi and the Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs exchanged views on the most pressing regional developments and ongoing diplomatic efforts.

The two top diplomats further consulted on bilateral relations and the current trends in regional diplomacy aimed at addressing regional

SPORTS

Iran beach soccer drop to sixth in world ranking

TEHRAN - The Beach Soccer Worldwide Rankings show Iran national beach soccer team moved down one spot to sixth.

Team Melli, who have recently claimed the title of the 2026 Asian Beach Games in Sanya, sit sixth in the ranking with 1958 points.

Brazil remained top with 4085.25 points, followed by Portugal, Russia, Italy, Belarus and Spain.

In the women's division, Spain lead the table, followed by Portugal and Ukraine.

Iran discover fate at AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027

TEHRAN - Iran national football team discovered their opponents at the 2027 AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia Saturday night.

The draw ceremony was held at the historical Salwa Palace in Riyadh.

The continental showpiece, to be hosted by Saudi Arabia for the first time, kicks off on January 7, 2027.

Saudi Arabia, seeking to lift the coveted trophy for the fourth time, will face 1980 winners Kuwait, Oman and Palestine in Group A.

Group B will see Uzbekistan, Bahrain, DPR Korea and Jordan vying for the two automatic spots to the Round of 16.

Standing in Iran's way of a fourth title in Group C will be Syria, Kyrgyzstan and China.

Australia - champions in 2015, lead Group D, with Tajikistan, 2007 winners Iraq and Singapore their challengers.

Aiming to deny twice-winners Korea Republic progression from Group E will be United Arab Emirates, Vietnam and either Lebanon or Yemen, who will meet in June to decide the final qualifier for the continental showpiece.

Record four-time winners Japan lead the Group F cast, with defending champions Qatar, Thailand and Indonesia also seeking to advance to the knockout stage.

The top two sides from each group and the four best third-placed teams will advance to the Round of 16, which will be played between January 22 and 25. The quarter-finals are scheduled for January 28 and 29, with the semi-finals on February 1 and 2.

The final will be played on February 5, 2027 at the King Fahd Sports City Stadium, where the champions of the 19th edition will be crowned.

Draw Result

Group A: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Palestine

Group B: Uzbekistan, Bahrain, DPR Korea, Jordan

Group C: Iran, Syria, Kyrgyzstan, China

Group D: Australia, Tajikistan, Iraq, Singapore

Group E: Korea Republic, UAE, Vietnam, Lebanon/Yemen

Group F: Japan, Qatar, Thailand, Indonesia

Iran will 'definitely' compete in FIFA World Cup, seeks assurances over visas

Tehran - Iran's football federation said on Saturday the country «definitely» would participate in the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

However, they insisted that tournament hosts — the United States, Canada and Mexico — consider Tehran's concerns around the team's travel and how it will be treated.

«All players and technical staff, especially those who served their military service in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, should be granted visas without problems.» Football Federation of Iran president Mehdi Taj said.

In the statement carried by the state-run IRNA

news agency, Taj said on Friday that Iran had presented conditions tied to participation, including guarantees over visas, security and treatment of Iranian players and officials, and added that Team Melli would take part «without retreating from our beliefs, culture and convictions».

Iran is in a fragile ceasefire with the United States after the U.S. and Israel sparked a war with attacks on Iran on February 28.

Iranian citizens are currently subject to a travel ban imposed by the Trump administration.

The remarks came after Canadian authorities last month denied entry to Taj ahead of a FIFA Congress, reportedly because of his past ties to Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard, which both the U.S. and Canada have designated as a terrorist organization.

Taj has repeatedly said that Iran would seek assurances from FIFA that Iranian officials and players, and the national flag and anthem, would be treated with respect during the World Cup.

Concerns over issuing visas to people who had completed their mandatory military service in the Guard had been raised previously by others.

The matter potentially could affect one of Iran's key players, Mehdi Taremi, team captain and a striker who had completed his mandatory military service in the Guard.

In Iran, conscripts also can be assigned to the police or the army, often at random.

Iran's team has drawn with Belgium, New Zealand and Egypt in Group G and opens the World Cup against New Zealand in Inglewood, next to Los Angeles.

Iran has qualified for four consecutive World Cups and seven overall but has never advanced out of the group stage. Currently ranked number 21 in the world, Iran lost just one match in the Asian qualifying.

FIFA chief Infantino wishes Iran 'the very best'

TEHRAN - Gianni Infantino has wished the Iranian football team "the very best" for the upcoming World Cup in North America.

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

"I wish Iran the very best as they embark on their fourth successive FIFA World Cup campaign," Infantino wrote in a social media post.

Iran will play their first match against New Zealand on June 15 in California, U.S.

Iran's Football Federation earlier asked FIFA to relocate its fixtures to Mexico over security concerns amid the war. However, FIFA rejected the plea, stating that logistics could not be changed this close to the tournament.

Iran have qualified for four consecutive World Cups and seven overall but has never advanced out of the group stage.

Football in Asia has improved: Ghalenoei

TEHRAN - Amir Ghalenoei, the head coach of the Iranian national football team, stated that football in Asia has improved.

Ghalenoei made these remarks after the Iranian national team was drawn into Group C of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia alongside Syria, Kyrgyzstan, and China.

"Predicting football is difficult, and we cannot say from now whether we will bring the championship or not. In the previous edition, we had the chance and the merit to win, but bad luck struck us," he said.

«Football in Asia has improved, and teams have grown closer to each other. Although there are four seeding pots, football in Asia has become very competitive. Our team are in good condition and are among the teams that have qualified for the World Cup quickly,» Ghalenoei added.

«We hope to put on acceptable performances at the World Cup as well, and then prepare for the Asian Cup, because after the World Cup we will also undergo a generational change. I hope that in the World Cup and then in the Asian Cup, we will be a good representative for the people of Iran,» he concluded.

Pistachio export increases 250% in a month on year

TEHRAN- Deputy Minister of Horticulture at the Ministry of Agriculture said: "In the first month of the current Iranian calendar year, Farvardin (March 21-April 20), pistachio exports increased by more than 250 percent compared to the same period last year, reaching 5,363 tons.

According to IRNA from the Ministry of Agriculture, Mohammad Mehdi Boroumandi stated on Sunday that the increase in pistachio exports occurred despite the fact that exports via the southern borders of the Persian Gulf were not possible due to the imposed war.

He added: "According to statistics, the main problem regarding pistachio pests has also improved."

Iranian pistachios are renowned globally as the "green gold" of Persia, prized for their distinctive flavor, rich taste, and superior quality. With over 600,000 hectares of orchards, Iran leads the world in pistachio cultivation area, producing varieties like Akbari, Ahmad Aghaei,



and Fandoghi. These nuts are not just a culinary delight but an economic powerhouse, with exports reaching over 65 countries. Despite climatic challenges, Iran maintains rigorous production standards. The pistachio holds deep cultural significance, featuring prominently in traditional cuisine and ceremonies, symbolizing prosperity and hospitality in Persian culture for thousands of years.

'Industry-knowledge enterprise co-op; national drilling strategy for domestic production of equipment'

TEHRAN- The managing director of the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) emphasized the role of knowledge-based companies in meeting the specialized needs of the drilling industry and said: "Cooperation between industry and knowledge-based enterprises is the national drilling strategy for domestic production of the equipment."

Morteza Fooladi, on the sidelines of a visit to knowledge-based companies based in Ahvaz, told IRNA: "The development of local technologies, support for domestic production, and utilizing the capacity of elites and domestic specialists are among the most important approaches of the National Drilling Company in improving the operational and technical capability of these entities."

He noted: "Effective interaction between industry and knowledge-based companies can play an important role in accelerating the process of equipment domestic production, reducing dependency, meeting specialized needs, and increasing productivity in the drilling industry."

According to this report, the visit was conducted in line with developing technological interactions and supporting domestic capacities of knowledge-based companies.

During this visit, the capabilities, achievements, and scientific and technical capacities of knowledge-based companies in areas related to the oil industry, drilling, and specialized equipment manufacturing were examined, and areas for joint cooperation to meet the technical and operational needs of the country's drilling industry were discussed and exchanged.

Additionally, managers of knowledge-based companies, while introducing their latest products, services, and technological capabilities, presented their views and suggestions regarding the development of cooperation with the National Drilling Company.

Over 9m tons of hot-rolled steel sheet produced in a year

TEHRAN- According to the statistics of the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA), 9.123 million tons of hot-rolled steel sheet was produced in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year 1404 (ended on March 20).

Based on the ISIPA data, the country's hot-rolled steel sheet production in 1404 fell 0.4 percent from the production figure in 1403, which was 9.157 million tons.

Hot-rolled steel sheet is a fundamental material produced by rolling steel at high temperatures, typically above 1,700°F (926°C)—above the steel's recrystallization point. This elevated temperature allows the steel to be easily shaped and formed into large, thin sheets. The process begins with a slab of steel that is heated in a reheat furnace, then passed through a series of roughing and finishing rolling stands, and finally coiled for cooling.

Because hot rolling occurs at high heat, the finished sheet exhibits several characteristic

features. It has a rough, scaly surface due to oxidation during cooling, and looser dimensional tolerances compared to cold-rolled steel. However, it is prized for its ductility, toughness, and low cost. It also experiences minimal work hardening, making it suitable for further forming operations like bending or stamping without cracking.

Common applications include construction components (I-beams, railroad tracks, structural pipes), agricultural equipment, automotive frames, truck chassis, and heavy machinery parts. It is also used for shipping containers and storage tanks. While it lacks the smooth finish and precise dimensions of cold-rolled steel, hot-rolled sheet is ideal for projects where aesthetics and tight tolerances are secondary to strength and economy. Its ability to be produced quickly and in large volumes makes it a cost-effective choice for many industrial sectors, from infrastructure to metal fabrication.

World economy edges toward crisis as Iran standoff drains oil supplies

TEHRAN- The global economy is moving into dangerous territory as the two-month conflict between the United States and Iran continues to choke oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, according to an analysis published on Saturday by The Globe and Mail.

While financial markets have remained surprisingly buoyant, fueled by repeated U.S. media reports suggesting an imminent peace deal, columnist John Rapley warns that those assurances may be masking a rapidly deteriorating situation.

The Strait of Hormuz remains all but closed, with insurers refusing to cover vessels navigating the channel. Ship owners are staying away, and the flow of oil from the Gulf has nearly stopped. A full-blown energy crisis has already broken out across much of Asia, where fuel is being rationed and plastic supplies are running out.



North America has so far been shielded by large buffer stocks and local supply, experiencing only higher gasoline prices. But those reserves are depleting quickly, partly because U.S. companies are boosting exports to meet global demand. Estimates vary, but some analysts predict stocks could run

dry within four weeks. If that threshold is crossed, oil prices could skyrocket to \$150 per barrel or more.

Signs of stress are already appearing in bond markets, where interest rates on government debt have risen nearly a third of a

percentage point higher than before the war. Airlines are cutting flights, and drivers are reducing their mileage in response to rising pump prices.

Rapley notes there is genuine desire on both sides for a truce, and China is likely persuading Iran to reach a deal. However, significant gaps remain, particularly over Iran's nuclear program. The current proposal is essentially an agreement to keep talking, with even the best-case scenario requiring weeks more negotiations.

But the world economy does not have that kind of time. The columnist concludes that U.S. President Donald Trump may ultimately have no choice but to accept a deal that looks like surrender — something his apparent aversion to being labeled a loser makes far from certain.

Intensified production competition with UAE's exit from OPEC: analyst

TEHRAN- An international oil and energy market analyst, stating that the UAE chose the worst time to leave OPEC, believes: "The world's energy market is now more than ever dependent on supply and demand conditions, and although the UAE's exit from OPEC does not threaten OPEC, it fuels competition among oil producers."

Fereydoun Barkeshli, in an interview with IRNA examining various dimensions of the UAE's decision to withdraw from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), said: "Mr. Al Mazrouei, the UAE's oil minister, announced on April 28 that his country would leave OPEC and the OPEC+ group of allied oil-producing and non-OPEC countries as of May 1, 2026; he cited the reason for this decision as being within the framework of UAE's national interests, following detailed expert reviews, and based on an assessment of the global oil market in the coming years."

Referring to the history of OPEC's formation and noting that countries leaving and sometimes returning to OPEC has a long history with various reasons, he said: "Ecuador left OPEC in 1992 and Gabon in 1995. Ecuador returned to OPEC in 2007 but left again in 2020; Gabon returned in 2016. Indonesia suspended its OPEC membership in 2009, returned in 2016, and left again the same year. Qatar left OPEC in 2019. Angola left OPEC in 2024."

Barkeshli continued: "The entry and exit of eligible countries from OPEC is not an unprecedented phenomenon. Of course, the admission of any new member requires the approval of all five founding members — Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Kuwait. But any member may leave at its discretion."

Disputes over production quotas and production-sharing contracts: the main reason for leaving OPEC

The international oil and energy market analyst said: "Examining the reasons for countries' decisions to leave OPEC points to disputes over oil production quotas. Gabon left OPEC over a request for an additional quota of 5,000 barrels. Iran, Venezuela, and Nigeria proposed allocating a small portion of their quotas to Gabon to dissuade it from leaving, but Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states opposed this."

Barkeshli noted: "Behind the scenes of the quota issue, and on a technical level, the main issue involves the entry of international companies and production-sharing or participation contracts. International oil companies' programs in host countries are based on maximum production."

He added: "A look at OPEC's history shows that disputes of countries that left OPEC were driven by pressure from international oil companies, which did not allow host countries to restrict production in sectors under their ownership. Indonesia was an exception, as it transformed from a net exporter to a net importer during its OPEC membership and left reluctantly and regretfully. Nigeria also faced issues with international companies' participation in production at times, but the foreign companies' share was small."

Hawks and eagles in OPEC

Barkeshli stated: "For decades, OPEC countries have been divided into two groups: Hawks and Eagles. Countries with high reserves, like Saudi Arabia, favored higher production and lower oil prices. Countries with

lower reserves favored restricting production and raising prices."

This energy market analyst continued: "In the past, Saudi Arabia led the countries favoring higher production and lower prices. Iran led the countries favoring lower production and higher prices. The members of the group led by Iran were mostly non-Arab OPEC members like Venezuela or Nigeria. Of course, Libya and Algeria were also led by Iran."

He added: "In recent years, the global oil market conditions and OPEC's role and structure have undergone changes. Saudi Arabia, which still holds the highest production level in OPEC, now favors production restrictions and relatively lower prices. Mohammed bin Salman's development plans have become much more expensive than initial estimates. In the country's 2025 budget, the desired oil price was stated as \$92 per barrel."

Footprint of shale oil in disputes among OPEC members

The international oil and energy market analyst also said: "Of course, a major concern for all OPEC and non-OPEC members is the growth of shale oil in the United States. Shale oil will grow faster than before at prices above \$70–75 per barrel. Since shale oil entered the market in early 2010, OPEC members have favored, from a medium- and long-term perspective, a price level that prevents unconventional crude oils and new and renewable energies from growing too rapidly. The issue of renewable energy and shale oil is always on the agenda of OPEC and OPEC+ meetings."

Barkeshli stated: "The UAE, with limited oil reserves, seeks to maximize production. The UAE's economy has diversified significantly, reducing its dependence on oil revenues. Additionally, international oil companies are demanding higher production."

He continued: "The UAE's economic approach in the Persian Gulf region and among GCC members is unique. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and others, where some traditional considerations, especially traditional political attitudes, still prevail, in the UAE, affairs are run like an economic enterprise. This policy approach has made the UAE somewhat different from other sheikhdoms in the region. The other GCC members more or less follow Saudi policy frameworks."

Role of non-oil disputes with Saudi Arabia in leaving OPEC

This international oil and energy market analyst, stating that among the major factors behind the UAE's exit from OPEC, non-oil disputes with Saudi Arabia must also be seriously considered, explained: "Disputes between the two countries intensified since the Yemen and Sudan wars. The Saudi government supports the established government, while the UAE supports opposition groups. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia is simultaneously at war with both the Houthis and the UAE, while the UAE wants to establish a desired government in Yemen that can control the Gulf of Aden coast and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait."

He added: "The UAE strongly avoids any interference of religious beliefs in politics and has had disputes with Riyadh in this regard. Among all Persian Gulf sheikhdoms, the UAE has established the closest relationship with the Israeli regime. Abu Dhabi has gone so far in its ambitious regional policies that on several occasions, it directly clashed with Saudi army forces, causing casualties."

Barkeshli continued: "The Emiratis realized that in the future, a country's power would not come from the wellhead, but from controlling the routes of oil tankers. Saudi Arabia is also aware of this, but due to its high production volume and large share of global oil demand, it expects that major consumers like China will quickly pave the way for normalizing Saudi oil flows."

He noted: "The two countries' regional disputes have been raised many times in the GCC with no result. These same disputes have pushed the UAE further toward Israel and the US. Saudi Arabia, while maintaining its relations with the US and the West, has moved closer to China and Russia."

In his view, "Within the framework of these regional policies, Saudi Arabia signed a security agreement with Pakistan, and the UAE drew closer to India, and both countries have established special relations with Israel. The UAE has for years been designing a pro-secession axis against Iran's resistance axis."

Redefining energy order of world

The international oil and energy market analyst said: "It is true that the UAE's rapid movement toward integration into the global market and international economy contradicts regional constraints and divisions to some extent, but this does not justify the UAE's exit from OPEC and OPEC+. Abu Dhabi joined OPEC in 1967. In 1971, along with other sheikhdoms, the UAE was formed as a single country and joined the OPEC family. The UAE knows very well how to go about increasing its quota within OPEC's framework, and we have never had any OPEC member with significant unused capacity for a long period."

He acknowledged: "At the same time, it is true that Abdulaziz bin Salman's management style in OPEC annoyed Al Mazrouei. However, arguing for liberation from OPEC's constraints and then calling OPEC a cartel when only a few days remained before the UAE's official exit from OPEC was discourteous and outside conventional oil diplomacy in OPEC. We have never before heard an OPEC oil minister, two days before officially leaving OPEC, call the organization a cartel."

Barkeshli believes the UAE chose the worst time to leave OPEC. "On one hand, the Al Qasbi family in Sharjah, which has always had issues with Abu Dhabi, is raising new problems; on the other hand, by expelling Pakistani and Indian Shiites — who were among the best foreign migrant workers in the UAE — the country has unintentionally entered ethno-religious tensions that will likely continue in some form in the future."

This international oil and energy market analyst explained: "Abu Dhabi could have had OPEC's and the GCC's support. The UAE has also left OPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries). This organization, headquartered in Kuwait, was for years an umbrella and coordinating group for Arab oil-producing countries within OPEC. The UAE's population is nearly 11 million, with about 1.4 million natives. In this country, discussions revolve around trade and commerce, differing from Saudi Arabia, which has 36 million native population."

He recalled: "The UAE's exit differs from what has happened in OPEC before. The UAE is OPEC's third-largest producer after Saudi Arabia and Iraq. In 2025, the UAE held 11.5% of OPEC's collective production."

Handala's digital storm topples US-Israeli cyber supremacy

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN – For decades, the U.S. and Israel have sold the image of their cyber defenses as an absolute fortress, a multi-billion-dollar architecture designed to ensure that while American and Israeli forces struck the region, they themselves would remain untouched behind layers of code.

That illusion has evaporated. At the center stands Handala, a hacking collective named for Naji al-Ali's iconic refugee child who turns his back on an unjust world. Today, that child is fighting.

Since the commencement of the recent U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, Handala has evolved into a strategic front of the Axis of Resistance, proving that empires built on technological hubris are far more fragile than their marketing suggests.

Blood debts and the Stryker wipeout

When American-made munitions turned an Iranian elementary school in Minab into a graveyard, killing 120 children and dozens of school staff in a single afternoon, the Resistance's retaliation extended far beyond the front lines. They ensured the cost was also extracted in the West's most precious currencies: digital sovereignty and military intelligence.

A few days after the massacre, Handala delivered a masterclass in asymmetric retaliation. Targeting the Stryker Corporation, a technology giant deeply entwined with the Pentagon, the group bypassed traditional malware.

They also hijacked Microsoft Intune administrative credentials to remotely wipe 200,000 devices across 79 countries.

Factories stalled, logistics networks evaporated, and a \$25 billion pillar of the military-industrial complex ground to a halt. The message across the dark screens of Stryker's global offices was clear: "Betrayal of the oppressed yields only disgrace."

Dismantling Israel's brain trust

For years, Handala sat silently within the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), the primary think tank of Israeli intelligence. When the floodgates opened, 66,000 emails from former intelligence chief Tamir Hayman and 55,000 from analyst Raz Zimmt spilled into the public domain.

These were a roadmap of the regime's anxieties, revealing failed defense strat-



egies and the internal realization that the resistance had achieved parity.

The humiliation climbed straight to the top. In December 2025, Handala breached former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's iPhone 13 in "Operation Octopus," leaking contact lists with senior officials, internal communications, sensitive documents, and personal family photos. Bennett himself was forced to admit the compromise.

This was followed by the April exposure of former military chief Herzi Halevi. Among the 19,000 files was the viral clip of him hiding beneath a piano during a missile alert. It shattered the myth of unshakable military leadership, revealing instead a command paralyzed by private fear. The leak also included images of Halevi meeting Arab officials, including a photo from Qatar showing him alongside former U.S. CENTCOM commander Michael Kurilla beneath a portrait of Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

These high-profile breaches built upon years of earlier penetrations that had already shredded Israel's elite circles: over 110,000 emails from Ehud Barak, nearly 50,000 from Gabi Ashkenazi, and more than 100,000 sensitive files from the Israel Police.

No sanctuary for the aggressors

The digital battlefield has now moved from servers into the pockets of those waging the war. In an operation that sent shockwaves through the Pentagon, Hand-

ala exposed the identities and personal data of 2,379 U.S. Marines alongside tens of thousands of Navy personnel stationed across the Persian Gulf.

Thousands of American service members received chilling WhatsApp messages: "Say goodbye to your families; our missiles have your coordinates." This personalized psychological warfare forced U.S. bases into immediate lockdowns.

Even the FBI was not spared; shortly after the U.S. government seized Handala's domains, the group retaliated by breaching the personal Gmail of FBI Director Kash Patel, mocking the agency's inability to protect its own chief while it hunts ghosts in the machines.

The reach of the collective has expanded to also include regional enablers. The UAE's Port of Fujairah, a critical fuel hub for the U.S. fleet, saw 11,000 sensitive documents leaked, while Dubai's judicial and transport authorities lost petabytes of data in a massive purge.

From the blueprints of the Iron Dome exfiltrated from PSK Wind Technologies to the personal files of former U.S. envoy Robert Malley, the message remains consistent: there is nowhere left to hide.

In an era of hybrid conflict, Handala demonstrates how determined actors can impose lasting costs, amplify resistance voices, and keep the spirit of defiance alive.

Netanyahu between war fallout and internal crises

From page 1 ▶ However, this formula has more complex layers. On one hand, even some political rivals acknowledge Netanyahu's military successes since October 7, 2023, but these have not translated into electoral gains. It only highlights a bloodthirsty Zionist ideology, in particular the Gaza genocide.

On the other hand, his criminal trial remains open, the ruling party is experiencing internal tensions, and the opposition is trying to reorganize its ranks.

Media reports indicate that months before the Knesset election scheduled for October, the Israeli regime is entering an early electoral battle where war calculations overlap with leadership crises and party conflicts.

Although Netanyahu has no serious rival inside Likud, the party does not appear stable. His desire to guarantee many seats on the next candidate list has caused concern, especially amid talk of securing up to 10 personal picks, at a time when polls give Likud only about 25 to 27 seats.

This practically means reducing several current ministers and Knesset members' chances of securing safe positions. This move is seen as part of a broader attempt to reshape Likud into being more loyal to Netanyahu. According to reports, he seeks a disciplined slate of figures who owe him greater personal loyalty and lack independent power bases within the party.

Additionally, internal disputes reflect fears that primaries might reveal discontent or trigger internal conflict at a sensitive time. This indicates a crisis of trust between Netanyahu and his party officials, who fear the candidate list could become a personal tool rather than a traditional party line-up.

To make matters worse, there is talk of a new right-wing party being formed, described behind the scenes as "Likud B" a party in the spirit of the "old Likud."

According to analysts, the significance of this scenario is that it does not target the left or center but goes directly after Likud's voter base. Names mentioned include Gilad Erdan, Moshe Kahlon, and Yuli Edelstein, all former Likud officials, though no final framework has been announced yet.

This option could attract right-wing voters dissatisfied with Netanyahu personally, especially those seeking a right-wing alternative that belongs neither to the fragmented opposition nor to the far right represented by Bezael Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

When it comes to war and its outcomes, Netanyahu is disappointed that the illegal U.S.-Israeli war in Iran has not translated into a tangible rise in Likud's strength. Gaza, according to commentators, remains an open arena where Hamas is recovering and rebuilding its capabilities, showing no intention of giving up its weapons.



Lebanon is a troubled quagmire, exacting a heavy price, where Hezbollah remains a formidable resistance force. Netanyahu cannot present his supporters with a picture of decisive victory or a final settlement on any front.

Netanyahu's trial is one of the most divisive issues, especially as it remains open to multiple judicial and political possibilities. The situation becomes more complicated given the external dimension this case has taken, with direct intervention from President Donald Trump pushing for a presidential pardon for Netanyahu, followed by President Isaac Herzog refusing to grant one without consensus.

Netanyahu's trial is heavily linked to the results of the upcoming elections. If he loses the vote, harsh personal scenarios could open up before him, as he would be tried without po-

litical immunity or popular support. So the upcoming election is both a political and personal battle for him: either he succeeds in convincing the Trump administration into continuing wars on several fronts and claims electoral capital, or he faces what could be the most threatening phase for his future since returning to office.

As a result, Israelis are divided over Netanyahu's trial and his court appearances. Some reject dragging a prime minister, whom his supporters claim is "reshaping the map of the Middle East" into the courtroom so often.

Others believe Netanyahu has become unqualified and unfit to lead or make fateful decisions, given his exhaustion, illness, and repeated interrogation. This feeds a broader debate questioning whether Netanyahu should remain in power after his long years in office.

Misjudged war underestimated Iran's technological sophistication: Jeffrey Sachs

'Trump's war on Iran will significantly reduce US military presence in Persian Gulf'



From page 1 ▶ A renewed escalation would likely lead to the destruction of the region's oil, gas, and desalination infrastructure, causing a prolonged global catastrophe. Iran can credibly impose costs that the United States cannot bear and that the world should not suffer.

The U.S.-Israel war plan was a decapitation strike, sold to President Donald Trump by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and David Barnea, the director of the Mossad. The premise was that an aggressive joint U.S.-Israeli bombing campaign would so degrade the Iranian command structure, nuclear program, and IRGC senior leadership that the country would fracture. The United States and Israel would then impose a pliable government in Tehran.

Trump seems to have been convinced that Iran would follow the same course as had occurred in Venezuela. The U.S. operation in Venezuela in January 2026 removed Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in what appears to have been a coordinated operation between the CIA and elements inside the Venezuelan state. The U.S. won a more pliant regime, while most of the Venezuelan power structure remained in place. Trump seems to have believed naively that the same outcome would occur in Iran.

The Iran operation, however, failed to produce a pliant regime in Tehran. Iran is not Venezuela, historically, technologically, culturally, geographically, militarily, demographically, or geopolitically. Whatever happened in Caracas had little relation to what would take place in Tehran.

The Iranian government did not fracture. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), far from being decapitated, emerged with a tightened internal command and an expanded role in the national-security architecture. The Supreme Leader's office held; the establishment closed ranks behind it; and the population rallied against external attack.

Two months on, Trump and Netanyahu have no Iranian successor government under their control, no Iranian surrender to close the war, and no military pathway whatsoever to victory. The only path, and the one the U.S. seems to be taking, is a retreat, with Iran in charge of the Strait of Hormuz and with none of the other issues between the U.S. and Iran settled.

Several reasons explain America's disastrous miscalculations and Iran's successes.

First, American leaders fundamentally misjudged Iran. Iran is a great civilization with 5,000 years of history, deep culture, national resilience, and pride. The Iranian government was not going to succumb to U.S. bullying and bombing, especially reflecting on the fact that Iranians remember how the U.S. destroyed Iranian democracy in 1953 by overthrowing a democratically elected government and installing a police state that lasted 27 years.

Second, American leaders dramatically underestimated Iran's technological sophistication. Iran has world-class engineering and mathematics. It has built an indigenous defense industrial base, with advanced ballistic missiles, a homegrown drone industry, and indigenous orbital

launch capability. Iran's record of technological development, built up despite 40 years of escalating sanctions, is a stunning national achievement.

Third, military technology has shifted in a way that favors Iran. Iran's ballistic missiles cost a small fraction of the U.S. interceptors deployed against them. Iranian drones cost \$20,000; U.S. air-defense interceptor missiles cost \$4m. Iran's anti-ship missiles, with costs in the low six figures, threaten U.S. destroyers that cost \$2-3bn. Iran's anti-access and area-denial network around the Persian Gulf, layered air defense, drone and missile saturation capacity, and sea-denial capability in the strait have made the operational cost of imposing American will on Iran far higher than the United States can sustain.

Fourth, the U.S. policy process has become irrational. The Iran war was decided by a small circle of presidential loyalists at Mar-a-Lago, with no formal interagency process and a National Security Council that had been hollowed out across the preceding year. Trump's director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Joe Kent, resigned on March 17 with a public letter describing "an echo chamber" used to deceive the president. The war was the output of a decision-making system in which the deliberative apparatus had been turned off.

This was neither a war of necessity, nor a war of choice. It was a war of whim. The underlying premise was hegemony. The United States was attempting to preserve a global dominance that it no longer possesses, and Israel was trying to establish a regional dominance that it will never have.

The likely endgame, given all this, is that the war will likely end with a return to something close to the status quo ante, except for three new facts on the ground. First, Iran will have operational control over the Strait of Hormuz. Second, Iran's deterrent posture will be significantly raised. Third, the U.S. long-term military presence in the Persian Gulf will be significantly reduced. The other issues that supposedly prompted the U.S. to attack Iran — Iran's nuclear program, regional "proxies," the missile arsenal — will most likely be left where they were at the start of the war.

Even as the U.S. retreats, Iran will not press its advantage against its neighbors. Reasons explain why. Iran has a long-term strategic interest in cooperation with its Persian Gulf neighbors, not an ongoing war. And, Iran will have no interest in restarting a war it has just successfully ended.

Trump will no doubt try to depict the coming retreat as some great military and strategic victory. No such claims will be true. The truth is that Iran is far more sophisticated than the United States understood; the decision to go to war was irrational; and the underlying technology of war has shifted against the U.S. The American empire cannot win the war against Iran at an acceptable financial, military, and political cost. What America can regain, however, is some measure of rationality. It's time for the U.S. to end its regime-change operations and return to international law and diplomacy.

Tourism minister unveils post-war revitalization plan



TEHRAN – Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, has announced a strategic roadmap to boost Iran's tourism sector following the conclusion of the recent US-Israeli attack on the country.

Speaking on the sidelines of a memorial service for martyr Ali Larijani and his son at Imam Sadeq (AS) Mosque in Tehran on Saturday, Salehi-Amiri revealed that 149 historical sites have been identified as damaged so far due to foreign strikes. "Some of these sites are located within military zones, and a full assessment is currently pending safer access," he stated. Initial estimates place the financial damage at approximately \$7.5 million.

Salehi-Amiri condemned the strikes as a manifestation of a "deep-seated animosity" toward Iran's millennia-old civilization. "A regime with less than a century of history, built on occupation and the blood of children, cannot tolerate the grandeur of an ancient civilization like Iran," he remarked, referring to the Zionist regime.

Tehran has launched a diplomatic and legal offensive, communicating the extent of the cultural destruction to the United Nations, UNESCO, and the Hague. According to the Minister, UNESCO has pledged to dispatch a technical delegation to Tehran at the earliest opportunity.

"The atrocities in Tehran and Isfahan have been documented by over 40 international media outlets, echoing even within American news cycles," Salehi-Amiri noted.

He added that a national and global campaign is being formed to involve Iranians at home and abroad in the reconstruction of the

149 damaged monuments. Technical studies and debris removal have already commenced, with stabilization efforts set to begin in the coming days.

Reflecting on the recent Nowruz holiday (March 21 to April 4), the Minister highlighted the remarkable resilience of the Iranian people. Despite the shadow of war, over 29.7 million trips were recorded across the country.

"This year, the pattern of travel shifted toward security," he explained, noting that 4.8 million people visited Mazandaran and 3.8 million traveled to Gilan. Notably, 4.7 million Iranians sought the tranquility of rural areas, aligning with the government's efforts to revive village-based lifestyles, culinary traditions, and handicrafts.

The Minister confirmed that a specialized post-war tourism stimulus package has been finalized following consultations with the Ministry of Economy, the Planning and Budget Organization, and the Central Bank. "The implementation of this plan will coincide with the official declaration of our national victory," he asserted.

Salehi-Amiri also pointed to the government's commitment to rural development, stating that in the year 1404, 60 trillion rials were allocated to rural employment, resulting in 29,000 individuals being introduced to banks for job-creation facilities.

"We believe in a cultural migration back to our roots," the Minister concluded. "By reviving the authentic lifestyle of our villages, we are not just boosting tourism; we are preserving the very essence of the Iranian identity."

US-Israel war on Iran leaves Jordan's Petra nearly empty of tourists

Ukrainian tourist Ruslana Novak and her friend had Jordan's ancient city of Petra largely to themselves as they stood before its vast facade carved into pink sandstone.

Since the United States and Israel's war on Iran began in late February, the famed Rose City has been largely deserted, its usual crowds of foreign tourists all but gone.

"Of course, we heard about the war ... It is not a problem because I am from Ukraine, and we know about war," Novak, an insurance agent, told the AFP news agency.

"This country is surrounded by countries that have war, but Jordan is ... very calm," she said, describing it as safe and beautiful.

At the site's entrance, souvenir seller Khalid al-Saidat and his colleagues lingered in front of their stalls, cigarettes hanging from their lips. The donkeys and horses that usually transport tourists through the valley also stood idle.

The scene, he said, reflected "the collapse of tourism" in Jordan.

"The war in Gaza had led to an 80 to 90 percent drop in tourism", while the Iran conflict had reduced the number of foreign visitors to "almost zero".

"We open every day without knowing whether we'll earn enough to live on," he added.

Tourism accounts for 14 percent of Jordan's gross domestic product, according to official figures, with 60,000 people directly employed in the sector and another 300,000 dependent on it. Last year, more than seven million visitors generated \$7.8bn in revenue.

Beyond Petra, Jordan is home to other major attractions, including the lunar landscapes of Wadi Rum, the Dead Sea and the famed archaeological site of Jerash.

The year had started strongly, "with 112,000 foreign visitors in the first two months, which is very good", said Adnan al-Sawair, chairman of the board of commissioners of the Petra tourism authority.

"But everything changed with the war," he said. The impact was immediate, with visitor numbers to Petra in March and April dropping to between 28,000 and 30,000.

Cancellations have been so severe that some hotels are considering closing.

Authorities have launched a scheme to encourage domestic tourism, but its impact remains "negligible", Sawair said, as the sector depends above all on foreign tour groups.

Since the start of the war, debris from drones and missiles has fallen on the kingdom, which does not host any foreign military bases but does have limited contingents from several countries under collective defense and cooperation agreements.

Jordan's army said 281 Iranian missiles and drones had been fired at the country from the war's onset until the beginning of the April ceasefire, most of them intercepted.

Before the war, booking calendars at travel agencies were almost full, according to the national association. They then emptied abruptly, causing a crisis for 1,400 licensed guides.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Final journey of a legend: Iran's first modern explorer Issa Omidvar dies at 97

TEHRAN – Issa Omidvar, the legendary Iranian traveler, documentary filmmaker, and researcher who along with his brother Abdullah put Iran on the global map of contemporary exploration, passed away in Tehran on Saturday. He was 97.

He had been hospitalized for several days due to complications related to old age, Persian media reported.

His death marks the end of an era for Iranian exploration, leaving behind a legacy that transformed how the world viewed the "other."

Born on December 23, 1929, he and his younger brother Abdullah were the first modern Iranian globetrotters to embark on extensive research-based expeditions to the most remote corners of the world in the mid-20th century.

Starting from Tehran in 1954, the brothers' first seven-year odyssey was a feat of endurance. The brothers began their epic adventure with just \$90 each and two British-made 500cc Matchless, through the rugged terrains of Afghanistan and Pakistan. They crossed into India, South-east Asia, and eventually reached Australia. From there, they crossed the Pacific to explore the vast landscapes of Alaska and the Arctic Circle, where they lived among the Inuit people, documenting the harsh realities of life in the frozen north.

Their anthropological curiosity then led them to the depths of the Amazon rainforest. In an era long before GPS or satellite communication, the Omidvars were among the first outsiders to make peaceful contact with the Jivaro headhunters and other indigenous tribes of South



America. Their footage of these encounters remains some of the most important ethnographic records in existence.

Upon completing their first trek, and after a brief return to Iran, the French company Citroën gifted them a 2CV car, which they used for a subsequent three-year journey across the Americas and Europe. Their explorations were not mere sightseeing; they were pioneering anthropologists who documented tribes and societies that have since vanished or been transformed by modernity.

They braved the Sahara Desert and reached the Congo, where they spent months researching the Pygmies. Their adventure culminated in a historic trip to Antarctica, making them the first Iranians to set foot on the southernmost continent.

Throughout their travels, Issa and Abdullah acted as unofficial ambassadors of Iranian culture.

They met with world leaders and intellectuals, but their heart remained with the common people. "We didn't travel to see monuments; we traveled to see humanity," Issa once remarked in an interview.

While Abdullah eventually settled in Chile—becoming a prominent figure in Chilean cinema before passing away in 2022 at the age of 89—Issa returned to Iran to preserve their findings.

Their remarkable decade-long journey was even highlighted by The Guardian, which revisited their rare documentary footage, showcasing their bravery in navigating the Amazon, the Arctic, and the Congo.

Their collection in the Saadabad Complex—which includes everything from primitive hunting tools of the Amazon to ceremonial masks from Africa and even a fragment of a meteorite—serves as a bridge between Teh-

ran and the most remote corners of the globe.

While the Omidvar Brothers Museum recently sustained damage during the US-Israeli attack on the Iranian soil, the spirit of their work—symbolized by the phrase "All Different, All Related"—remains more relevant than ever. The museum's collection of 16mm films and thousands of photographs continues to be a primary source for researchers studying the mid-20th-century world.

Issa Omidvar spent his final years in Tehran, meticulously organizing their archives and inspiring young Iranians to look beyond their borders with courage and compassion. His passing comes just days before a scheduled ceremony to honor him on International Museum Day on May 18.

14 historical sites damaged in recent attacks in Kordestan



TEHRAN – The cultural landscape of western province of Kordestan province has suffered a severe blow following recent military strikes by the US and the Zionist regime, with early estimates placing the financial toll on historical monuments between 700 to 800 billion rials (approximately \$388,000 to \$444,000).

Ali Behnia, the Deputy for Cultural Heritage of Kordestan province, revealed that the number of damaged sites has risen to 14 after new assessments identified structural trauma to the iconic Moshir Divan Mansion. "Our teams have conducted fresh inspections, and unfortunately, the Moshir Divan Mansion has been added to the list of affected structures," ISNA quoted Behnia as saying on Sunday.

Following an urgent directive from the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, emergency conservation and stabilization have commenced. Behnia explained that the current focus is on initial fixation, which includes comprehensive documentation, shoring up weakened walls, and stitching structural cracks to prevent further collapse.

"The shockwaves from the explosions have caused deep structural fissures across various sections of these monuments," Behnia noted. He cautioned that while the ministry is committed to immediate restoration, the process will be long and meticulous. "Restoring a 300-year-old building is not a quick task. It is a scientific process based on modern conservation principles,

especially when dealing with intricate decorations like Orsi (stained glass) windows that require traditional wood and glass craftsmanship."

The provincial heritage department confirmed that the damage is widespread, affecting some of the most significant landmarks in Sanandaj. Among the sites hit are the Habibi Mansion, Salar Saied Mansion (Archaeological Museum), Asef Vaziri Mansion (House of Kurds), and the grand Khosroabad Mansion.

Other affected landmarks include the residence of Ayatollah Mojtahedi, the Pir Omar Mosque and Shrine, the Jameh Mosque of Sanandaj, and several historical homes including the Malek al-Tojjar and Amin al-Islam houses.

The Cultural Heritage Department is currently finalizing technical studies and will soon convene a technical council to approve the final phases of the restoration. However, officials warn that the delicate nature of these historical assets means the scars of the aggression may take years to heal.

The Ramadan War has left a painful mark on Iran's architectural and historical landscape. Iranian cultural and historical sites sustained serious structural damage during the aggression by the US and the Zionist regime. This targeted strikes on these venues are viewed by many as a

deliberate attempt to dismantle the physical settings where the country's sovereign diplomacy and international relations were forged.

Beyond the immediate loss of infrastructure, the targeting of such landmarks represents a grave violation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property. Iranian officials and cultural experts have characterized these acts not merely as collateral damage of war, but as a systematic civilizational assault aimed at erasing the collective memory and historical continuity of the Iranian people. By striking at sites that represent centuries of Persian heritage and governance, the aggressors have sought to demoralize the nation by undermining the very foundations of its cultural and national identity.

In the face of this cultural tragedy, the Iranian government has prioritized the preservation and restoration of damaged sites as a matter of national security and pride. Moreover, Tehran is preparing a comprehensive legal dossier to be presented to international bodies, seeking to hold the perpetrators accountable for what it defines as war crimes against the shared heritage of humanity, asserting that the nation's civilizational roots remain indestructible despite the physical toll of the conflict.

German airports warn fuel costs may cut millions of flights

The German Airports Association has warned of the possible cancellation of millions of flights and higher air ticket prices amid expected shortages in kerosene supplies.

Ralph Beisel, Chief Executive Officer of the association, told the edition of German newspaper Welt am Sonntag that there are concerns over additional flight cancellations

by low-cost airlines and on routes to destinations with limited tourism appeal.

He added that the best-case scenario for 2026 would be stagnation in passenger numbers, while the worst-case scenario could see operational capacity at some airports decline by 10 percent, potentially affecting up to 20 million passengers.

Beisel noted that some destinations may no longer receive flights at all, while flights to other destinations could become less frequent and more expensive.

Jet fuel prices have surged sharply following disruptions to oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz caused by the Iran war, prompting some airlines to cancel a number of flights.

DOE chief: Birds are messengers of peace and life

TEHRAN – The head of the Department of Environment (DOE), Shina Ansari, in a note, has described birds as the messengers of peace and life, holding the international community responsible for ensuring the safety of the sky where birds' wing whistle is a promise of life's continuity.

Traveling thousands of kilometers, these amazing birds not only make political and geographical borders meaningless, but also act as precise indicators of the ecosystem's health, IRIB quoted Ansari as saying on Sunday.

The official made the remarks on the occasion of the World Migratory Bird Day observed on May 9 and October 10, every year.

"The fact that major migration routes pass through Iran doubles our duties to make our cities safe havens for birds.

But wars know no borders. The recent US-Israeli aggressions have targeted the lives of innocent people and biosecurity, disturbed the peace in the region, and led to an unprecedented level of environmental destruction.

Military tensions and explosions cause habitat destruction, noise pollution, and disrupt their migration routes," Ansari further noted.

The official went on to say that the WMBD is a global call to peaceful coexistence. The day reminds humans of their grave responsibility to safeguard their shared natural heritage.

WMBD 2026 highlights the important role of community science (also known as citizen science) in the conservation of migratory birds.

Themed "Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter!", the 2026 campaign shines a spotlight on people-driven efforts essential to bird conservation and science, celebrating how individuals, communities, and organizations around the world are helping build the knowledge base to better conserve migratory birds across borders.

By focusing on the contribution of individuals, participatory science and public bird moni-



toring efforts, the campaign will celebrate the millions of bird enthusiasts around the world that are contributing to the data and knowledge that inform policy decisions and are essential for bird conservation, through each recorded observation.

Encompassing numerous wetlands, reservoirs, and diverse water bodies, Iran welcomes millions of migratory birds every year. The country has also emerged as the most important stopover for migratory birds in their flight route from Siberia to the Nile, as sixteen percent of them select to spend the winter in the country.

Iran is the most important country in West Asia in terms of housing migratory birds in winter, as around two million birds fly each year to spend winter in the country's wetlands.

Ecocide in an unjust war

According to Article 55 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, the natural environment must be protected against widespread, severe and long-term damage in armed conflict. The 1976 Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Hostile Use of Environmental Modification (ENMOD) also prohibits any hostile use of environmental modification with widespread, long-lasting or severe effects.

Nevertheless, the US-Israeli attacks, with the widespread explosion of oil storage facilities in Tehran and Alborz provinces, the release of large amounts of air pollutants, and the encirclement

of Tehran with a layer of smoke, are a clear example of "ecocide" or "environmental crime."

Destruction of infrastructure, explosions, fires, and pollutants from military operations have severe and long-term effects on soil, water, air, and wildlife.

According to Ansari, this inhumane act represents a serious threat to the lives of innocent people and civilians who, in addition to severe mental and emotional trauma, must endure the dangerous environmental consequences of this unjustly imposed war.

The Department of Environment has outlined the administration's achievements and measures to protect biodiversity, ecosystems, and endangered species in the country.

The number of protected areas under the supervision of the DOE has increased from 327 to 330, accounting for 12 percent (19.8 million hectares) of the country's land area, IRNA quoted Hamid-Reza Zohrabi, an official with the DOE, as saying.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, a total of 213 species are endangered.

The country has so far prepared plans to preserve 25 endangered species, such as the Persian cheetah, zebra, Asiatic black bear, yellow deer, lesser white-fronted goose, white-headed duck, Persian salamander, blind cave fish, and *Sorbus luristanica* (a rare plant species native to Iran). The

DOE is preparing thirteen more plans.

The population of prominent herbivorous mammals in the protected areas has increased from 227,000 to more than 240,000, and the number of managed invasive species has grown by 400 percent, covering five species, including crucian carp, nutria, raccoon, and rainbow trout.

Monitoring pests and diseases, and fire outbreaks in Zagros habitats is another measure taken by the DOE, which has led to the identification of Hyrcanian boxwood pest, the awkward silkworm moth in Gilan province, and the wood-eating pest of Aras in Khorasan Razavi province.

Given the importance of protecting biodiversity and genetic resources, the DOE is planning to prepare a plan to combat plant pests and pathogens as the main threat to the country's unique ecosystem.

To protect caves, the DOE has developed cave classification guidelines and plans for the conservation and sustainable use of caves in the country. The number of caves with a conservation grade has increased from 7 to 41, indicating an increase of 490 percent.

There are also plans to raise individuals, local communities, and tourists' awareness of the importance of preserving caves' biodiversity and water resources. The DOE is planning to utilize the capacity of collaborative conservation to protect sensitive and important cave ecosystems.

Constant monitoring of caves, particularly tourist caves, preparing caves' database, identifying and prioritizing caves in terms of protection, assessing the capacity of tourist caves, protecting the biological and physical diversity of caves, and protecting water resources are among the plans to be conducted collectively.

The DOE has also established a working group to monitor wildlife cybercrimes and combat illegal wildlife trade. Wildlife trafficking is the third most profitable crime, following drug and weapon trafficking.

Plant biosecurity for food security

TEHRAN – International Day of Plant Health is held annually on May 12 to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity and the environment, and boost economic development.

International Day of Plant Health 2026, with the theme "Plant Biosecurity for Food Security," focuses on biosecurity as the front-line defense for food systems. By protecting our plants today, we are proactively securing the livelihoods and nutrition of billions.

Ninety-eight percent of the oxygen we breathe comes from plants. Eighty percent of the food we eat is provided by plants. But we lose as much as 40 percent of crops from pests and diseases every year, impeding efforts to provide food and nutrition for all.

Plant biosecurity is like border control and hygiene for plants — checking, protecting, and responding to prevent dangerous plant pests and diseases from damaging crops and disrupting their trade. It serves as a safety net, so we have food on our tables and farmers' jobs are safe. It keeps international trade smooth and preserves precious biodiversity.

Biosecurity tools such as international plant health standards applied in their trade underpin the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Four Betters by enabling better production, better nutrition, better environment and better lives for all, leaving no one behind.

The annual value of trade in agricultural products has grown almost threefold over the past decade, largely in emerging economies and developing countries, reaching USD 1.7 trillion.

FAO estimates that agricultural production must rise by about 60 percent by 2050 to

Save the date
12 May 2026 | International Day of Plant Health
Theme: Plant Biosecurity for Food Security and Nutrition
Protecting plants, protecting life.
#PlantHealthDay
#ProtectOurPlants

feed a larger and generally richer population.

Climate change threatens to reduce not only the quantity of crops, lowering yields, but also the nutritional value. Rising temperatures also mean that more plant pests and diseases are appearing earlier and in places they were never seen before.

Conservation of native, endemic plant species

In November 2025, the head of the Iranian parliament's environment fraction, Somayeh Rafiei, underlined paying special attention to endemic and native plant species and implementing plant diversity conservation projects in the country.

Zagros [forests in the western part of the country] is one of the top 20 global biodiversity hotspots, and nine out of 11 ecosystems in the world have been identified in the country, which is why Iran has a rich diversity of flora and fauna, ISNA quoted Rafiei as saying.

The country is home to over 8,500 plant species, most of which are found in Zagros, while there are only 5,000 plant species known in Europe, she added.

Emphasizing the significance of developing a gene bank and genome map for plant genetic resources in the country, especially those that are disappearing, the official

called for supporting research projects on plants.

She also underlined prioritizing endemic and native species, focusing on those that have medicinal values and those that are drought-resistant and play a key role in ensuring food security.

Considering that Iran is one of the countries with low vegetation and only seven percent of its total area is covered with forests, the need to increase the country's green space is very important.

One of the very important reasons for increasing the country's vegetation is that Iran is the seventh carbon-producing country in the world, and in terms of carbon absorption, Iran has a very low rank.

Due to the importance of the per capita increase in Iran's green spaces, a campaign titled "Green Iran, Strong Iran" and a national program for planting one billion saplings over the course of four years were launched.

Experts say tree planting is a climate change solution that doesn't require scientists to come up with technological solutions to draw carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. It is available now. It is the cheapest one possible, and everyone of us can get involved.

Nigerien minister of public health lauds IRCS services



TEHRAN – Niger's Minister of Public Health, Colonel-Major Garba Hakimi, has commended the high-quality health services offered at a medical center affiliated with the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) in Niamey, capital of Niger.

Accompanied by Ali Tiztak, the Iranian Ambassador to Nigeria, the official paid a visit to the center on Friday, on the occasion of World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day 2026, which is observed annually on May 8, the IRCS website reported.

The two sides highlighted the need to boost cooperation, particularly in the health sector.

IRCS to act as regional rescue, relief training hub

Thanks to the high capabilities of the IRCS and its remarkable achievements over the past years, particularly during the US-Israeli war against the country, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has decided to choose the IRCS as the regional hub for rescue and relief training, the head of the IRCS has said.

This responsibility highlights global trust in the experiences, commitments, and capabilities of the IRCS, Mehr news agency quoted Pirhossein Kolivand as saying.

An IFRC delegation, led by Xavier Castellanos Mosquera, the IFRC undersecretary-general for national society development and operations coordination, is paying a field visit to the civilian areas, such as residential units and medical centers like Gandhi hospital that were targeted and devastated by the United States and Israeli regime during the imposed 40-day war. The delegation is accompanied by Kolivand.

Holding a meeting on April 23, the officials also discussed the devastating impacts of sanctions on rescue services and people's health.

Condemning the inhumane measures of the aggressors, Mosquera highlighted the importance of legal action in international forums, and explicitly that would carry the Iranian nation's voice for justice to the ears of the world.

The official also lauded the IRCS relief services and efforts, including quick responding to crises and deploying relief workers, attracting volunteers, providing public trainings, rehabilitation and social services, as well as distributing medicines and medical tools, effectively and precisely.

Recruiting rescuers that ride horses, establishing helal (crescent) houses, and expanding neighborhood-based services were among IRCS initiatives that, according to Mosquera, should be introduced as successful models to other national societies.

The IFRC has put the priority on showcasing the IFRC's capabilities, specialized staff, and professional volunteers to international societies.

Mosquera officially asked the IRCS to share its valuable experiences with other societies to help them enhance their global preparedness and operational capacity, which further underlines the role and inspiring position of the IRCS in the international arena.

"The Iranian Red Crescent Society is our reliable global partner; the international societies should know that during the 40-day [US-Israeli imposed] war, more than 100,000 rescuers volunteered to provide relief services," IRNA quoted Castellanos Mosquera as saying on April 19.

Earthquakes down by 44% in a month yr/yr

TEHRAN – A total of 247 earthquakes hit Iran over the past calendar month, from March 21 to April 20, indicating a 44 percent drop compared to 558 earthquakes that struck Iran in the first month of the spring last year.

Statistically, 237 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3, 29 earthquakes with a magnitude between 3 and 4, and 8 earthquakes with a magnitude between 4 and 5, have occurred in the country, IRNA reported.

Among the provinces of the country, Khorasan Razavi experienced the highest number of earthquakes, with 36, followed by Kerman with 32, and North Khorasan with 29 earthquakes. During the same period, one out of the five earthquakes that hit Tehran province had a magnitude of 4.1 on the Richter scale.

Of the total quakes, two had a magnitude of 4.6 on the Richter scale, which occurred on April 10 in Khuzestan and April 11 in Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad provinces.

Compared to a month earlier, the number of earthquakes recorded across the country in the first month of spring has also been in a downward trend, decreasing from 403 to 247.

From February 20 to March 20, statistically, 333 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 53 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4; and 17 earthquakes with magnitudes between 4 and 5 occurred in the country.

Of the total quakes, one had a magnitude

of 4.6 on the Richter scale, which occurred on February 27 in Kermanshah province.

Among the provinces of the country, Fars, with 64, experienced the highest number of earthquakes, followed by Khorasan Razavi and Kerman provinces with 41 and 37 earthquakes, respectively.

During the same period, five earthquakes hit Tehran province.

A total of 2,380 earthquakes with a magnitude of more than 2.5 on the Richter scale were recorded across the country over the past calendar year (March 2025–March 2026) according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran, Mehr news agency reported.

Out of recorded earthquakes, 910 had a magnitude greater than 3, 130 had a magnitude greater than 4, and 15 had a magnitude greater than 5 on Richter scales.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes in the world occur in Iran, but more than 6 percent of the victims of the world's earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes.



Managing Director: **Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati**
Editor-in-Chief: **Mohammad Sarfi**

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 43051601
Email: info@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 43051505
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051430



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

MAY 11, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The best of manners is that which prevents you from committing sins.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:01 Evening: 18:19 Dawn: 03:25 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 05:02 (tomorrow)

IAF cinematheque to show "Avatar: Fire and Ash"

TEHRAN – The cinematheque of the Iranian Artists Forum (IAF) in Tehran will screen "Avatar: Fire and Ash" by James Cameron on Monday.

The 2025 epic science fiction film will be shown at the Nasser Hall of the IAF at 5 p.m. with Persian subtitles.

Produced by Lightstorm Entertainment, it is the third installment in the "Avatar" film series and the sequel to "Avatar: The Way of Water" (2022). The film features Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Sigourney Weaver, Stephen Lang, and Kate Winslet reprising their roles from previous films.

The story follows the human-turned-Na'vi Jake Sully and his family on the habitable moon Pandora, as they face the combined threat of the human RDA forces and the Mangkwan, a ruthless Na'vi clan.

Following the box office success of "Avatar" (2009), Cameron announced two sequels. "Avatar: Fire and Ash" started shooting simultaneously with "The Way of Water" in New Zealand in 2017, and filming wrapped in 2020. With an estimated production budget of at least \$350 million, it is one of the most expensive films ever made.

"Avatar: Fire and Ash" had its world premiere last December. Critical response was mixed to positive, with praise for the visual effects and spectacle, but criticism for its runtime of more than three hours and for repeating the narrative beats of its predecessors.

It was a box office success, grossing \$1.490 billion worldwide and becoming the third-highest-grossing film of 2025, as well as the 16th-highest-grossing film of all time.

The film won Best Visual Effects at the 98th Academy Awards and was also nominated for Best Costume Design. It received two nominations at the 83rd Golden Globes, and was named as one of the top ten films of 2025 by the American Film Institute and the National Board of Review.

Two sequels are scheduled for release in 2029 and 2031, respectively, though their status



is dependent on the box office performance of "Fire and Ash".

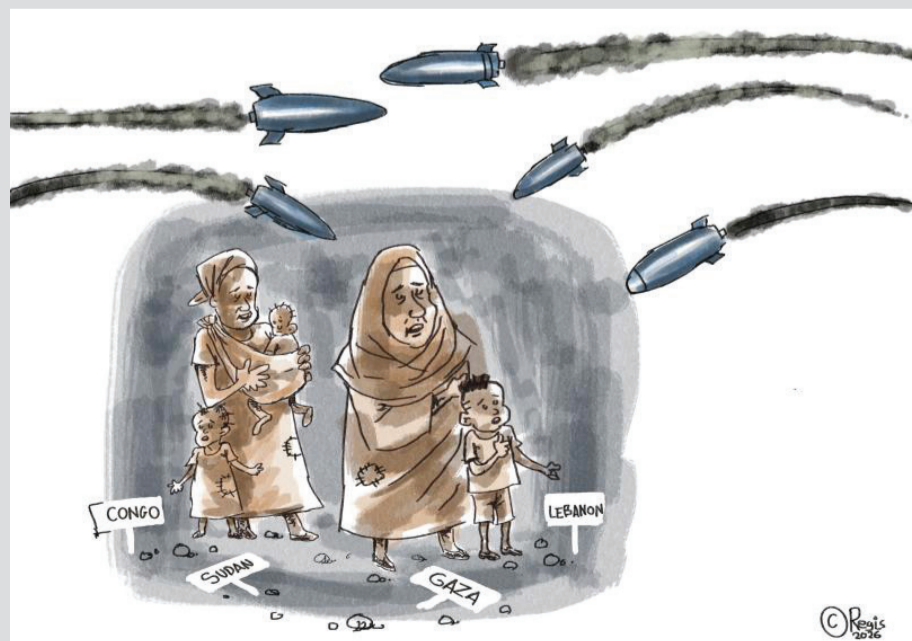
James Cameron, 71, is a Canadian filmmaker. His films combine cutting-edge film technology with classical filmmaking techniques and have grossed over \$10 billion worldwide, making him the second highest-grossing film director of all time.

A major figure in the post-New Hollywood era, Cameron has received numerous accolades, including three Academy Awards, two Primetime Emmy Awards, and four Golden Globe Awards, as well as nominations for six British Academy Film Awards.

He first gained recognition for writing and directing the science fiction action film "The Terminator" (1984). He had further success with "Aliens" (1986), "The Abyss" (1989), "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (1991), and "True Lies" (1994), as well as the "Avatar" franchise (2009-present). He directed, wrote, co-produced, and co-edited the historical romance epic "Titanic" (1997), winning Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Film Editing.

Three of Cameron's films, "Avatar" (2009), "Avatar: The Way of Water" (2022), and "Titanic," are amongst the top four highest-grossing films of all time. He directed the first film to gross over \$1 billion, the first two films to gross over \$2 billion each, is the only director to have had three films gross over \$2 billion each, and is the first director to have four consecutive feature films gross over \$1 billion each.

Cartoon of Day



MOTHER DAY
Cartoonist: Simon Regis from Tanzania

Poster of 7th online Tehran International Book Fair released

TEHRAN – The poster for the 37th edition of the Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF), the country's largest annual cultural event, which is to be held online for the seventh time, has been released.

The poster is designed by Marjan Jalali with art direction by Davood Arsooni. Drawing on Iran's visual identity through national colors and a conceptual narrative of the book, the poster aims to elevate "reading" from an individual activity to a social, cultural, and national act, Honaronline reported.

Using minimal and symbolic graphic forms, the poster unifies imagery representing "the book," "Iran," and "national identity" within a single frame.

In its design, an attempt has been made to portray the shape of Iran's geography through a mosaic-like arrangement of books that, while emphasizing the diversity of ethnicities and cultures, creates a simple metaphor for Iran's face. The blue color, merging with green and red books at the top and the bottom of the poster, respectively, symbolizes the everlasting Caspian Sea and the eternal Persian Gulf.

The green and red forms at the top and bottom of the poster initially evoke open books, whose pages, shaped like folded volumes, also reference the screens of reading tools such as tablets, e-readers, and mobile phones, offering a special nod to the virtual nature of the exhibition.

The breaks and angles in the poster recall the uneven borders of the country's geography; at the same time, the continuity of the forms reinforces the idea of territorial integrity and unity. The repetition of the book motif conveys the message that the geography of Iran is built from text and culture. In this narrative, each book symbolizes an ethnic group, a province,



or even an individual citizen, independent elements that, together, form the meaning of "Iran."

The poster's color palette is intentionally based on the three colors green, white, and red, creating visual balance while evoking the Iranian flag.

The Persian typography of the poster title, using a typeface rooted in Iranian calligraphy, appears geometric and modern, reminding the viewer of the ancient heritage of Iranian script while, alongside the poster's minimalist and modern structure, indicating that this heritage can be reinterpreted within new forms.

The motto selected for this year's edition of the fair is "Let's Read for Iran," just like last year in the 36th TIBF, highlighting the nation's commitment to fostering a culture of reading and intellectual engagement.

Organized by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the fair is widely regarded as Iran's most significant publishing event, annually drawing hundreds of domestic and international publishers as well as large crowds of book lovers, academics and cultural figures.

The decision to hold this year's fair online was finalized during the first meeting of the policy-making council in the new Iranian year, fol-

lowing a comprehensive review of the country's current situation and the status of the publishing industry, which have been negatively affected by the US and Israel on the country, that has led to the closure of some publishing units and hindered many publishers' ability to organize a physical presence at a large-scale venue.

The virtual format has been chosen for the seventh time following a model successfully established and tested during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, further details regarding publisher registration and the distribution of purchase subsidies, including book vouchers, will be released in the coming days.

The online edition of Tehran Book Fair was first launched in January 2021 by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance as a response to the cancellation of the 33rd TIBF due to the pandemic. From 2022 to 2025, the virtual event ran concurrently with the physical international exhibition. This year's transition to a purely virtual format marks a significant effort to maintain the country's premier cultural event amidst regional instability.

Over the years, the Tehran International Book Fair has evolved into a major cultural marketplace and a vibrant meeting point for publishers, writers, translators and readers. Beyond book sales, it hosts a wide range of cultural programs, including unveiling ceremonies, panel discussions, and professional meetings.

With preparations gaining momentum, the 37th edition is expected to once again underscore the central role of books and publishing in Iran's cultural landscape while strengthening the country's literary ties with the international community.

Venice Biennale strike sees more than 15 pavilions temporarily or partially close

A swathe of countries taking part in the Venice Biennale closed their pavilions on May 8 as part of a strike in protest against Israel's participation in the event. The action, organized by the Art Not Genocide Alliance group (ANGA), "rejects both the normalization of Israel's presence in cultural spaces and the economies of genocide in culture, while also denouncing the ecosystem of precarious labor that grows around the Biennale event," according to an ANGA statement.

Around 18 pavilions have been taking part in full or partial closures, including Iran, Austria, Lebanon, Slovenia and Egypt. A total of 237 curators, artists and art workers are said to be involved, The Art Newspaper reported.

Dries Verhoeven, the artist representing the Netherlands this year, stood outside his country's pavilion on Friday, a Palestinian flag and materials relating to the protest hanging on the shuttered door behind him. "We think it's very undesirable that Israel has been given the chance to artwash themselves with a pavilion in the Arsenale (one of the Biennale's two main venues), and we want to make that clear," he said.

"We are very happy to be here, to show our work for all the other days, but we see ourselves a bit as a horse of Troy. We want to discuss the event from the inside out and also to talk to the audience and to tell the audience, please don't accept this."

Verhoeven points to the fact that South Africa was barred from participating at the Biennale from the late 1960s to 1993, as a response to its apartheid regime. "I think the way artists and curators and art organizations manifested themselves back then, we should take that as an example."

Another country taking part in the strike action is Poland. Agnieszka Pindera, the pavilion's commissioner, said the curators and the two artists spearheading the project "were deeply affected" by the decision to include Israel and Russia among the participants, and "they wanted somehow to provide a release to all of those emotions and take a stand."

Pindera added that the team hopes that the strike would contribute towards the Biennale changing its participation rules going forward: "It's not a sustainable system and we wanted to emphasize that business is not as usual."

Both Israel and Russia's inclusion have been



People march in Venice during a historic Biennale strike for Palestine and workers' rights on May 8, 2026.

the subject of extreme controversy in the run-up to the Biennale. Russia's show in its Giardini pavilion will close following the previews, amid warnings from the European Union (EU) that the Biennale could be breaching EU sanctions by facilitating Russia's participation. Films and music are expected to be playing at the pavilion during the closure.

Last month, meanwhile, the jury responsible for handing out prizes resigned after it had said it would not consider artists from countries whose leaders are under arrest warrants for crimes against humanity—largely understood to be a reference to Russia and Israel. It followed an open letter in March, organized by ANGA, which was signed by more than 200 Venice Biennale participants, demanding the cancellation of the Israeli pavilion.

Approaches to the strike have varied. At the Arsenale, Hagar Ophir's multi-sensory installation Living: Gathering in Venice was plunged into darkness as members of the team shut it down temporarily. Japan's pavilion remains open, but "the participatory and audio elements of the exhibition are suspended", a spokesperson said. The pavilion had been inviting visitors to pick up and carry an infant doll through the pavilion and surrounding garden.

Several pavilions have been shuttered, with their artists and curators not on site. One of several campaign posters on the floor of the

Lebanese pavilion read: "We stand with Palestine because we know by now that the destruction of Palestine is the destruction of the world".

An ANGA spokesperson explains that the intention is not to end the Biennale, but to encourage it to be "engaged again in thinking about itself as a body that could be an ethical light for its sector".

They add that another aspect of the strike action, which is backed by the Italian trade unions Associazione Difesa Lavoratori (ADL Cobas), Unione Sindacale di Base and Confederazione Unitaria di Base, concerned working conditions for those in Italy's culture sector. "Not everybody here is allowed to strike because they are on precarious contracts, for example," the spokesperson said. "So, we also wanted to highlight the way that labor is often a really big question of the Biennale."

Israel is being represented at the Biennale by the Romanian-born sculptor Belu-Simion Fainuru, who is based in Haifa. Fainuru previously said that "as an artist, I am opposed to cultural boycotts as I believe in the importance of dialogue and exchange, especially in difficult times". Russia is presenting a program called "The tree is rooted in the sky," featuring performances from figures including Diaki Kone, a Malian DH known as DJ Diaki, and the Russian folk ensemble Tolo-ka.