

Kushner's hacked iPhone exposed billions in secret Saudi and Emirati money

By staff writer

TEHRAN — Dutch military hackers sat inside Jared Kushner's iPhone in 2018 and watched him log in to a Dubai bank account that had taken in hundreds of millions of dollars, according to a new book by journalist Matthew Cole.

The account was allegedly one of at least two through which Abu Dhabi and Riyadh gave Donald Trump's son-in-law access to about \$2 billion while he steered Middle East policy from the White House. ► Page 5

Palestinian fighters kill 2 Israeli soldiers in fierce Al-Khalil confrontation

TEHRAN — Two Palestinian fighters from Al-Khalil (Hebron) held off Israeli troops for more than 20 minutes on Friday morning, killing two occupying soldiers before they were martyred at the Farsh al-Hawa checkpoint on the city's northern edge.

The fighters were Hamouda and Firas al-Jaabah, both 27, from the same family, each married with two children. Shortly after 7:30 a.m., they stepped out of their car at the junction Israel calls "Judea Junction" and opened fire on a Home Front Command unit.

The army named its dead as Staff Sgt. Ron Yonatan Roytman and Sgt. Yuval Shai Svilem and admitted to three lightly wounded, though early Hebrew-media reports counted six wounded. The Israeli military concedes it had no warning. ► Page 5

King Fahd Airport, Defense Ministry attacked as US tells Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN - At least two people were killed in a strike on a major airport in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday evening, as Washington ordered some U.S. diplomatic staff to leave the kingdom following weeks of deadly attacks by the Ansarallah military forces.

The Saudi authorities said in a statement on Thursday morning that a Saudi national and an Indian resident died in the strike on King Fahd International Airport in Dammam, a city in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province that is home to the state oil giant Saudi Aramco, according to the New York Times. Eight other people were wounded, the statement said, adding that airport was operating normally on Thursday. ► Page 5

Mobarak puppet festival closes with tributes to Minab children, veteran artists

TEHRAN- The 21st Tehran-Mobarak International Puppet Theater Festival concluded in Tehran with a tribute to the children martyred in Minab and honors for two veteran figures in Iranian puppetry, Adel Bezdoudeh and Homa Jeddikar.

The closing ceremony was held at Tehran's City Theater Complex on Thursday, bringing together theater artists and cultural officials to mark the end of the five-day festival, which featured performances for children and young adults, adult audiences, and open-air and inclusive theater programs, Mehr reported on Friday.

A central theme of the ceremony was remembrance of the children killed when the Shajareh Tayyebah school in Minab was struck in a US-Israeli military attack, killing 168 students and other civilians and causing widespread grief in the local community. ► Page 6



A vessel at the Strait of Hormuz, off the coast of Oman's Musandam province, April 12, 2026.

The US Naval Blockade of Iran: an Illegal Act of Coercion

Washington's blockade exposes the failure of coercion: military pressure and economic sanctions cannot guarantee Iran's submission or turn an unlawful use of force into strategic success.

By Maedeh Zaman Fashami

TEHRAN - An examination of the legal grounds for the US blockade of Iranian ports, what the UN Charter says, and how international law experts assess the action.

Imagine a country deciding to stop another country's commercial ships, prevent goods from reaching its ports, and effectively impose its own rules on vessels travelling through international waters. Does military power, combined with claims of national security, give that country the right to do so? If the answer is yes, what would stop any major power from turning the seas into tools of pressure and blockade whenever it has a dispute with another country?

These questions lie at the heart of the US naval blockade of Iran. A naval blockade is not simply a matter of stopping ships. It can disrupt a country's trade, drive up economic costs, and affect people's daily lives. For that

reason, international law does not give countries unlimited authority to restrict maritime traffic simply because they have military superiority or claim to be acting for security reasons.

Under international law, the US naval blockade of Iran cannot be justified simply by Washington's announcement or its claims of national security. Given the absence of UN Security Council authorisation and the lack of a valid legal basis for self-defence, the blockade, as part of the use of force against Iran, is illegal. One important distinction must be made, however: even during wartime, rules govern how a naval blockade may be carried out. Possible compliance with some of those

rules does not, by itself, make the original use of force lawful.

What does the UN Charter say?

The main legal document relevant to the US action is the United Nations Charter. Article 2(4) prohibits states from threatening or using force against other states. The purpose of this rule is to prevent governments from using their military strength to impose their will on other countries.

The Charter recognises two principal legal grounds for the use of force: authorisation by the UN Security Council and self-defence under the conditions set out in Article 51. A country seeking to justify a military blockade of another country must therefore demonstrate that its actions fall within one of these legal frameworks. ► Page 3



Iran sitting volleyball crown fifth consecutive title

TEHRAN - Iran's men's sitting volleyball team secured their fifth consecutive title at the Asian Para Games after sweeping past Kazakhstan in straight sets on Friday.

The Iranian team delivered a commanding performance at the Okazaki Central Park General Gymnasium, defeating Kazakhstan 3-0 in the final with set scores of 25-17, 25-15 and 25-17 to extend their dominance in the continental competition.

Sitting volleyball is one of the flagship team sports at the Asian Para Games, bringing together some of the continent's top athletes with physical impairments. Iran's latest triumph adds another chapter to the country's distinguished record in the discipline and reinforces their reputation as a major force in Asian para-volleyball.

Iran will not resume talks until its conditions are met: top security official

TEHRAN — Major General Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, has stressed that Iran will neither resume negotiations nor reopen the Strait of Hormuz until its seven conditions are met, warning that communications cables, regional data centers and artificial intelligence facilities could be targeted if hostilities resume.

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, Rezaei, who represents the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, addressed recent regional developments and Iran's position, emphasizing that any action against the country would carry a cost. ► Page 2

IRGC Navy chief: US forces have moved 700 kilometers away from Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN— The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy says US forces have moved 600 to 700 kilometers away from the Strait of Hormuz, attributing a retreat from the strategic waterway to the 'sacrifices of Iranian personnel killed in the line of duty.'

Brigadier General Ali Ozmaei made the remarks during visits to the families of Iranian personnel killed in the Ramadan War and in operations related to the Strait of Hormuz. He met the families of martyrs Ghodrat Zarangari, Abbas Eslami, Abdolreza Golzari and Javad Raoufi-Moqaddam at their homes in Bandar Abbas, conveying the message and greetings of Iran's commander-in-chief. ► Page 2

Iran urges end to double standards in IAEA's implementation of its statute

TEHRAN — Iran has called on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to end the selective and politically motivated implementation of its founding statute, urging the organization to uphold its legal obligations impartially and ensure equal treatment of all member states.

In a statement issued on Friday, October 23, to mark the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the IAEA Statute, Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna stressed that the agency's founding document must be implemented fully and consistently, without discrimination or political interference. ► Page 2

Iran opens university doors to Azerbaijani girls facing hijab restrictions

TEHRAN - Iran has invited Azerbaijani girls to pursue higher education at Iranian universities amid restrictions on wearing headscarves in schools in the neighboring country.

In a video message released on Thursday, Iran's Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, announced that Iranian universities were open to Azerbaijani girls seeking to continue their education while observing their religious dress.

"As the minister of science of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I declare that the doors of Iranian universities are open to girls from Azerbaijan who wish to pursue their studies," he said.

"We can be good hosts to the devout daughters of the Holy Prophet who are being forced to abandon their religious hijab in order to exercise their right to education," Simaei-Sarraf added. ► Page 7

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Beijing's priority is peaceful coexistence between Iran and neighbors

Majid Sharifi, an international affairs analyst, told the Iran newspaper that China's approach toward Iran is not based on identities or ideological alignment. As a result, Beijing does not necessarily view stronger relations with Tehran as entering into confrontation with the United States. China defines its ties with Iran within the broader network of its regional relationships and seeks to maintain balance among them. Therefore, the expansion of Tehran-Beijing relations cannot be explained solely by the intentions of the two sides or by existing opportunities for bilateral cooperation. From this perspective, one of the key prerequisites for deeper economic cooperation and stronger political relations is Iran's achievement of peaceful coexistence and stable ties with neighboring countries. Such a situation could reduce the complexity of China's strategic calculations and create more favorable conditions for expanding cooperation.

Kayhan: US not seeking negotiations

Kayhan addressed Trump's unsuccessful effort to force Iran into submission through negotiations. The newspaper wrote that the confrontation between Iran and the United States spans four dimensions: military, economic resilience, diplomacy, and cognitive-psychological warfare. According to the article, the last of these has become the backbone of Washington's strategy. It argued that the Trump administration, having failed to achieve its goals in reality, has relied heavily on psychological and influence operations. Recent US military movements, while appearing to signal war preparations, were portrayed as part of a broader strategy aimed at creating the illusion of diplomacy and inducing miscalculations among officials and the public. Referring to the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding and Washington's repeated violations of its commitments, the paper argued that these experiences demonstrate that the United States is not genuinely interested in real negotiations or meaningful concessions.

Ettelaat: Short but intense

Ettelaat explored the possibility of another military confrontation in the Persian Gulf region. The newspaper argued that the previous round of conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel increased energy prices, accelerated global inflation, weakened Middle Eastern security, and placed significant pressure on Pentagon air defense stockpiles. Citing reports from The New York Times, it said that the United States and Israel have prepared plans to resume military operations against Iran after the US midterm elections in early November. According to the article, planning is underway for a short but highly intense opera-

tion. Some officials reportedly believe that another large-scale wave of attacks could push Iran's economy toward crisis and force Tehran to make political concessions. Iranian officials, however, have stated that they are aware of such plans and are developing new targets and tactics in response. Tehran has also warned that any future conflict would not be brief and could extend to infrastructure in the region, including submarine internet cables and major Saudi oil facilities such as Aramco.

Hamshahri: Iran knows how to play the game

Hamshahri argued that the Islamic Republic, through its firm adherence to its principles, has sent a clear message to the White House that it does not trust the United States. According to the article, Trump and Netanyahu openly speak of weakening or destroying Iran, while soaring energy prices have become the main source of pressure on Trump. Rising oil prices have increased diplomatic activity by mediators seeking engagement with Tehran. The paper suggested that Munir's recent visit was intended to help stabilize oil markets and provide political relief for Trump ahead of elections. Nevertheless, it argued that the united stance of Iran's political leaders and senior military officials demonstrated that Tehran fully understands regional power politics. As a result, Munir reportedly left without achieving his objectives.

Sazandegi: America's strategy through psychological warfare

Sazandegi examined remarks attributed to Trump regarding the possibility of Iranian attacks on cities such as Los Angeles and San Diego. The newspaper argued that, if the statements were accurately reported, they could serve several purposes. First, they may be designed to amplify perceptions of an Iranian threat among the American public and justify confrontational policies or potential military action. Second, they could help rally international allies, increase pressure on Iran, and strengthen support for containment policies. Third, the rhetoric may carry domestic electoral benefits, ranging from reducing voter dissatisfaction to boosting Republican candidates. The article also suggested that such statements could indirectly strengthen the political position of Netanyahu and his allies in Israel. According to Sazandegi, the success of this strategy depends on the credibility of the claims, developments on the ground, and public reaction. It concluded that Iran's most effective response would be fact-based communication, active diplomacy, and efforts to prevent the country from being portrayed internationally as a threat.

IRGC: US has suffered strategic defeats in war with Iran

TEHRAN— Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi, spokesman for Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), says the United States has suffered a series of strategic defeats in its war with Iran, including setbacks to its claims of safeguarding regional security and ensuring the uninterrupted flow of energy.

In remarks published on Friday, Mohebbi said the adversary initially sought to change Iran's political system and break up the country before scaling back its ambitions into 13 more limited objectives, none of which it had achieved. He said the war had undermined Washington's longstanding assertion that its military presence in the region was essential to maintaining security. Despite its extensive naval capabilities and network of regional military bases, the United States had faced serious challenges in ensuring security and reopening the Strait of Hormuz, he added.

Mohebbi described the situation as a fundamental contradiction in US military doctrine, arguing that bases established in the name of providing security had instead become sources of insecurity.

He also said the conflict had called into question Washington's claims of intelligence superiority, exposing vulnerabilities in US intelligence centers and military bases.

The targeting of US fighter jets, the destruc-

tion of air defense systems and operations against American naval assets had further undermined Washington's assertions of technological and military superiority, the IRGC spokesman said.

Mohebbi also pointed to damage to the United States' international reputation, saying the Jeffrey Epstein case had already tarnished the country's image and that the targeting of the Minab school and the killing of children had further damaged its standing.

His remarks linked the consequences of the war to broader questions about Washington's credibility and its international conduct. Turning to the economic fallout, Mohebbi cited rising fuel prices and the United States' need for raw materials, including aluminum, as signs of mounting economic pressure resulting from the conflict. He presented these developments as further evidence of the war's costs for Washington, alongside the military and diplomatic setbacks he outlined.

Concluding his remarks, Mohebbi praised the Iranian people for their resilience throughout the period of resistance, describing their achievements as remarkable and worthy of recognition.

He said the public's steadfastness had been a significant factor in confronting the challenges posed by the war.

Iran will not resume talks until its conditions are met: top security official

From page 1 ► "If diplomacy can establish this understanding, we prefer diplomacy," he said. "But if the war continues, Iran has the necessary capabilities to sustain its response."

Rezaei noted that Iran had not deployed all its capabilities during previous stages of the conflict. The country had introduced additional capabilities in proportion to the intensity of the fighting, he said, adding that Iran was prepared for the next stage.

Prolonged conflict threatens energy stability

Warning of the broader consequences of continued hostilities, Rezaei said the current situation would have far-reaching strategic implications, including prolonged instability in global energy markets.

"Energy markets will not return to calm for the next three years," he said.

He also argued that the continuation of the conflict had shifted regional dynamics in Iran's favor, pointing to a rapid reassessment of relations with Tehran by Persian Gulf states.

According to Rezaei, these countries have come to recognize that the US military is unable to protect even its own bases, despite their expectations that Washington would defend their territories.

US regional assets could be



targeted

Rezaei warned that the United States maintains valuable assets across the region that could come under attack if a new war breaks out.

"Cables, data centers and artificial intelligence facilities could also be within range if war resumes," he said, adding that Iran had a broader plan prepared for a renewed confrontation.

His remarks signaled that a potential escalation could extend beyond conventional military targets to include digital and communications infrastructure.

Strait of Hormuz: Security, not revenue, is the priority

Turning to the Strait of Hormuz, Rezaei said the strategic waterway was under Iran's control and that Tehran was managing it.

"Smuggling exists everywhere in the world, but the Strait of Hor-

muz is under Iran's control, and we manage it," he said.

He added that, over the past two to three months, Iranian forces had targeted an average of five vessels each night 'belonging to smugglers.' Rezaei accused the commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM) of leading these operations and said Emirati military forces were also being used.

Rezaei emphasized that Iran's management of the strait was a strategic national asset and that the issue went well beyond collecting transit fees.

"The main issue is security," he said, adding that charges could also be levied to cover security, insurance and environmental costs. However, he stressed that the strategic importance of managing the waterway far exceeded any revenue it might generate.

Seven conditions must be met

IRGC Navy chief: US forces have moved 700 kilometers away from Strait of Hormuz



From page 1 ► During the meetings, Ozmaei paid tribute to those killed in the conflict and stressed the importance of continuing their path.

He said the sacrifices of those killed in the Strait of Hormuz had played a decisive role in confronting the United States, describing their actions as a blow to Washington's regional presence.

'The US has no place in the Strait of Hormuz'

Referring to the history of foreign powers' presence in the waterway, Ozmaei said the Strait of Hormuz had once been under the influence of powers including Britain, the United States and Portugal. He argued that the current regional situation was markedly different, asserting that US forces had withdrawn farther from the strait.

"Today, the Americans are not present in the Persian Gulf and have moved 600 to 700 kilometers away from the Strait of Hormuz," he said, adding that US vessels were no longer visible in the area.

Ozmaei declared that the United States no longer had a place in the strategic waterway, linking Iran's strengthened position to God's grace and the sacrifices made by those killed in the conflict.

The Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the wider Indian Ocean, is one of the world's

most strategically important maritime passages and a critical route for global energy shipments.

Addressing the families, the IRGC Navy commander expressed respect for their sacrifices and pledged continued support.

He described the families of those killed as a source of pride, saying that serving them would remain a duty for the armed forces.

Ozmaei also reaffirmed his readiness to defend the country, saying he regarded martyrdom in the service of God as his ultimate aspiration.

"If there is a war, we will be there," he said, asking the families to pray for his martyrdom.

The visits, according to the report, were intended to honor the memory of those killed and reaffirm the IRGC Navy's commitment to their families and the continuation of their path.

Iran urges end to double standards in IAEA's implementation of its statute

From page 1 ► The mission said the anniversary should serve not merely as an occasion for commemoration but as an opportunity to assess the agency's adherence to its founding principles, restore institutional accountability and renew its commitment to impartiality.

"The Statute is the Agency's constitution," the statement said, emphasizing that it must not be invoked selectively or interpreted according to the interests of powerful states.

The IAEA's full mandate

Iran stressed that the agency's responsibilities extend beyond nuclear safeguards and verification to include promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and advancing international scientific and technical cooperation.

Citing Articles II and III of the Statute, the mission said the IAEA is mandated to expand the contribution of atomic energy to global peace, health and prosperity, support peaceful nuclear research and applications, and ensure that its resources benefit all member states, with particular attention to the needs of developing countries.

The statement warned that an approach focused disproportionately on inspections, at the

expense of technical cooperation and peaceful nuclear development, would undermine the agency's ability to fulfil its mandate in a balanced manner.

Sovereign equality and NPT

The Iranian mission said the principles of sovereign equality and non-discrimination must guide the agency's dealings with all members, regardless of geopolitical considerations.

It cited Article IV.C, which establishes the sovereign equality of the agency's members, and Article III.C, which prohibits making assistance conditional on political, economic or military considerations incompatible with the Statute.

As an example of a discriminatory approach, Iran pointed to the scrutiny of its nuclear activities alongside the absence of comprehensive IAEA safeguards covering all nuclear activities of Israel, which is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The mission said this disparity raised questions about the consistency and credibility of international nuclear non-proliferation efforts, calling for a comprehensive and non-discriminatory verification framework across the Middle East.

It added that regional security could not be built on selective scrutiny and unequal expectations, stressing that all relevant legal obligations must be applied fairly.

Iran also called for the agency to protect the right of all member states to benefit from peaceful nuclear technology and scientific cooperation.

Independence and institutional credibility

Iran further emphasized the importance of safeguarding the IAEA's independence, professional integrity and confidentiality.

Referring to Article VII.F of the Statute, the mission said the agency's director general and staff must remain free from external instructions, while sensitive information obtained in the course of their duties must be protected.

It maintained that the agency's reports, assessments and decisions should be based on verifiable evidence, sound technical analysis and applicable legal obligations rather than political pressure or selective interpretations. Any misuse of confidential information, it added, could undermine trust and compromise nuclear safety and security.

Reaffirming the importance

before talks resume

Rezaei said Iran would not return to the previous diplomatic process but would not abandon diplomacy altogether.

According to Rezaei, Iran has conveyed seven new conditions through mediators. He said the country would not reopen the Strait of Hormuz or return to negotiations until those conditions had been implemented.

He outlined a proposed sequence for a new agreement, saying that its structure would itself contain guarantees for compliance.

"First, the commitments must be implemented. Then Iran will decide to reopen the strait, followed by the resumption of maritime traffic under new arrangements agreed upon with Oman," he said.

Rezaei stressed that Iran was no longer interested in an agreement whose only safeguard was the other side's political goodwill.

Iran will not relinquish its leverage prematurely

Rezaei said a path remained open to reopening the Strait of Hormuz and continuing diplomacy if Washington honored its commitments.

"Iran will not first give up the leverage that brought the other side to the negotiating table and then wait to see whether its promises are fulfilled," he said.

of credible safeguards and professional verification, Iran said it remained committed to engagement within the framework of its applicable legal obligations and its sovereign rights and interests.

However, the mission stressed that meaningful cooperation required good faith, mutual respect, professional integrity and the consistent implementation of legal commitments.

It called on the IAEA, particularly its Board of Governors and director general, to end double standards, resist politicization, protect confidential information, condemn attacks against peaceful nuclear facilities and restore the full implementation of its statutory mandate.

The mission also urged the agency to pursue an effective, balanced and non-discriminatory technical cooperation policy, enabling all member states, especially developing countries, to benefit from nuclear science and technology.

Concluding its statement, Iran said the IAEA's credibility depended not only on its authority to conduct inspections but also on its impartiality, independence, respect for international law and commitment to the legitimate rights of all members.

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An examination of the scope and nature of women's participation in Iran's critical arenas, in light of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's message on Nurse Day



From Seyyedeh Zahra Hosseini, whose memoir of the resistance in Khorramshahr was recounted in the book *Da*, to martyred nurse Marzieh Nabavinya, who died in a fire at Imam Sajjad Clinic in Rasht while caring for patients during the unrest of the Iranian month of Dey, and Mahsa Taheri, a scientist who attained her aspiration for martyrdom during the Third War, this history tells the story of women who did not abandon their responsibilities in difficult circumstances.

In this context, the Zaynab-inspired model means far more than patience in the face of adversity. It combines revolutionary upbringing, recognition of the truth, the courage to speak it, steadfastness in one's convictions, and timely presence where responsibility calls.

In the historical and cultural memory of Iranian society, Lady Zaynab al-Kubra (peace be upon her) symbolizes a woman who, in the aftermath of the tragedy of Ashura, did not allow the truth to be lost amid distortion and forgetfulness. Through her illuminating sermons, particularly in the court of Yazid, she demonstrated that the mission of defending the truth does not end when the battlefield falls silent. Sometimes, the more difficult stage comes afterward: explaining the truth, confronting distortion, and keeping the message of an event alive.

For this reason, the Zaynab-inspired presence of Iranian women should be understood through a range of interconnected roles: from providing emergency assistance and social support to cultural and media activities; from raising an informed generation to participation in scientific, social, and public-service fields.

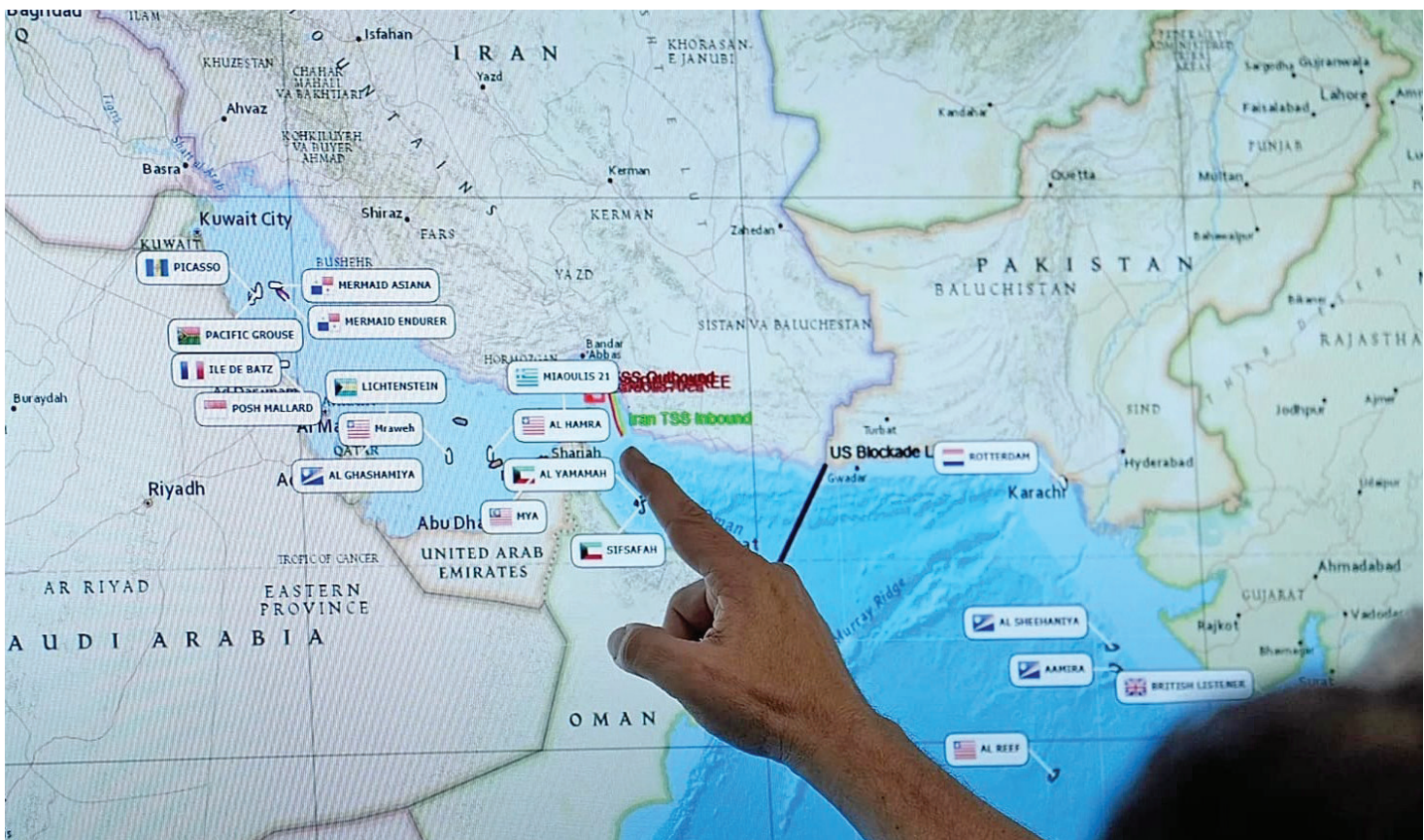
The experience of war has also shown that women's role is not limited to the home front. During the years of defense, many women, alongside their family responsibilities, took part in providing emergency assistance, caring for the wounded, supporting the forces, and looking after families affected by the conflict. This continuity connects the experiences of earlier generations with the presence of today's women and girls. It demonstrates that although the nature of the arenas may change, the duty and responsibility remain.

The martyred Leader of the Revolution repeatedly highlighted the pivotal and pioneering role of women in Iran's history and held a deep conviction in their capacity to contribute and participate across diverse fields. Iranian women and girls have demonstrated in the two most recent wars that the enemy's calculations regarding them were not only mistaken, but that the scale and nature of their presence in defending the Revolution and the homeland are such that they help shape the course of events.

Source: Seda-ye Iran online newspaper

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei has warned adversaries against assuming they can defeat Iran easily, drawing on a passage from the medieval Persian historian Abofazel Beyhaqi. In a post on X, he recalled an account of attackers who underestimated a

fortress defended by “lions,” believing their task would be effortless. Baqaei said the historical lesson remained relevant amid current threats against Iran, stressing that launching aggression under the illusion of an easy victory does not guarantee success.



In the case of the blockade of Iran, the United States cannot create its own legal authority simply by declaring a security emergency or seeking to put economic pressure on Iran. If the military action lacks a valid basis under the UN Charter, it cannot become lawful merely because Washington gives it an official name or announces a justification.

One important contribution to the legal debate is an article by Michael Schmitt, a professor and specialist in international law, published by Just Security. In his article, “Iran’s Conditions for Re-opening Hormuz: What International Law Requires, Permits, and Forbids,” Schmitt examines the legal basis for the US use of force against Iran.

Schmitt explains that, under the UN Charter, the use of force must generally be based on Security Council authorisation or the right of self-defence in response to an armed attack. According to his analysis, most international law experts believe that the initial US attack was not authorised by the Security Council and did not meet the necessary conditions to qualify as self-defence. He therefore considers the start of US military operations to be inconsistent with the country's obligations under the UN Charter.

His analysis is directly relevant to the blockade. If the legality of the original use of force is in question, the blockade cannot be treated as an entirely separate action and declared lawful simply by referring to the rules of naval warfare.

Steve Prest, a retired naval officer and analyst at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), raises similar concerns in his article, "The 'US Blockade' of Iran: How It Might Function (Or Not!)." He argues that the legality of the US action depends on whether the necessary conditions for using force have been met. Without Security Council authorisation, self-defence is the principal legal justification available to Washington, but Prest points to serious questions about whether that argument can justify the operation.

These analyses highlight the central issue: the question is not merely how the United States stops ships, but on what legal grounds it claims the right to use military force to blockade Iranian ports.

The United States may argue that naval blockades are a recognised method of warfare. That claim reflects part of the legal picture, but it does not tell the whole

story.

The San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea, adopted in 1994, sets out restrictions on naval blockades. Under its rules, a blockade must be declared, its limits must be specified, and it must be effectively enforced. It must also respect the rights of neutral states. Rules protecting civilians and ensuring access to essential supplies must be observed as well.

The San Remo Manual is not, in itself, a binding treaty. However, it is a recognised reference for assessing the law governing naval warfare.

The key point is simple: the fact that certain methods of warfare may be lawful does not mean that starting a war or using force is lawful.

A legal analysis published by German broadcaster Tagesschau on 18 July 2026 makes the same distinction. Citing Pierre Thielbörger, a professor of international law at the University of Bochum, the report explains that the legality of resorting to force must be distinguished from the legality of how military operations are conducted. In other words, a particular action may be assessed separately under the rules of naval warfare, but that does not erase the possibility that the war itself was unlawful.

For this reason, citing the rules governing naval blockades does not, on its own, answer the fundamental question: did the United States have the legal right to use force to blockade Iranian ports in the first place?

Another issue is the attempt to link the naval blockade to US sanctions. Washington may place companies or ships on its sanctions lists, but a decision made by one government does not automatically become international law.

Keri Batsov, a former US Treasury Department official, said: "Iran will not surrender under sanctions; the naval blockade has worn down the US military, and Iran's low-cost drones have challenged Washington's expensive weapons."

Article 92 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea recognises the principle that ships on the high seas are generally subject to the jurisdiction of their flag state. Article 110 sets out specific circumstances in which foreign ships may be boarded on the high seas.

These provisions make clear that the seizure of ships in international waters requires a legal basis. A vessel's commercial links to Iran, or its inclusion on a US sanctions list, does not by itself give the United States unlimited

authority to seize it.

Mark Nevitt, a legal scholar specialising in military and maritime law, raised concerns about this issue in an article published by *Just Security* on 1 May 2026. He warns that the United States is grouping several types of maritime operations, each with a different legal basis, under the single label of a “blockade.” He distinguishes a blockade of Iranian ports from the seizure of US-sanctioned ships in different parts of the world, stressing that each operation must have its own clear legal justification.

This distinction is crucial. Even if a limited blockade under certain conditions of armed conflict can be defended on legal grounds, that does not give the United States the authority to stop every ship linked to Iran anywhere in the world.

A naval blockade is not just a military measure directed at ports. Its effects can reach deep into the economy and people's everyday lives. Restrictions on ships entering and leaving ports can disrupt trade, raise shipping costs, and make essential goods more difficult to obtain.

International humanitarian law contains rules intended to prevent unjustifiable harm to civilians. Using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited, and a blockade must not be used as an excuse to disregard people's essential needs.

Ismail Kowsari, an Iranian parliament member and member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, has called for legal action over US measures against Iran. He said international legal mechanisms lack sufficient power and enforcement guarantees to address violations and hold those responsible to account. This, he said, has allowed some powers to pursue their interests without sufficient regard for the rights of other countries and peoples.

Kowsari said it was necessary to stand firmly against this approach and to drive the United States out of the region so that international law could be implemented in practice. Criticising international judicial institutions for failing to address US violations earlier, he said this should not bring legal efforts to a halt. Iran's judiciary, he argued, should carefully document US actions and violations against Iran, including the naval blockade, and pursue them through legal channels.

Kowsari also stressed the need to document the humanitarian consequences of sanctions, particularly in the medical and pharmaceutical sectors. He said patients and vulnerable groups depend on

essential medicines and medical equipment, and that any disruption to access could have serious consequences. Despite these needs, he added, sanctions can obstruct access to essential supplies while those imposing them continue without sufficient regard for the human impact.

He said the effects of these measures should be recorded accurately through credible documents, evidence, and other supporting material so that they can be pursued before the competent international bodies.

Assessing a blockade therefore requires more than counting the number of ships stopped or measuring the economic pressure it creates. Its impact on civilians must also be examined, including whether essential supplies remain available in practice.

A naval blockade can thus become more than an instrument of military pressure. It can develop into a humanitarian and legal crisis, and governments cannot escape responsibility simply by declaring that their actions serve security objectives.

The UN Charter and the analyses of international law experts show that the blockade of Iran cannot be assessed solely through the technical rules of naval warfare. The fundamental question remains: on what legal basis is the United States using force to blockade Iranian ports?

Michael Schmitt, writing for Just Security, questions the legal basis for the initial US attack. Steve Prest, writing for RUSI, raises serious doubts about whether self-defence can justify the operation. Mark Nevitt, also writing for Just Security, explains why a limited blockade cannot be turned into a blanket licence to seize sanctioned ships around the world. The UN Charter sets out the underlying principle: the use of force must be justified under international law.

The US naval blockade of Iran is therefore illegal in the absence of Security Council authorisation and a valid legal basis for the use of force. The rules of naval warfare cannot, on their own, resolve this fundamental problem. Nor do unilateral US sanctions give Washington unlimited authority to control Iran's maritime trade.

This is not just about Iran. It is about whether major powers will abide by the rules they accepted as part of the international order established after the Second World War. If military power is allowed to replace the law, naval blockades will no longer be exceptional measures. They could become tools that powerful countries use whenever they want to force another state to submit to their demands.

New horizons of economic co-op being formed between Mazandaran, Uzbekistan: Uzbek envoy

TEHRAN- According to a Khabar Online report from Mazandaran, Fariddin Nasriyev, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Iran, met with Mehdi Younesi Rostami, Governor of Mazandaran province, and while thanking the provincial officials for their warm hospitality, emphasized the broad capacities for economic and trade cooperation between Mazandaran and Uzbekistan.

Referring to the meeting held at the Mazandaran Chamber of Commerce, the Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Iran stated: "A very good meeting was held with the participation of economic actors, which shows the high interest of Iranian traders in cooperating with Uzbekistan, as well as the desire of Uzbek traders to benefit from the capacities and manufactured products of Mazandaran."

Referring to Mazandaran's economic and production capacities, Nasriyev considered the development of interactions between the merchants of the two sides a suitable ground for increasing trade exchanges and added: "The interest of the economic actors of the two countries in joint cooperation has provided a valuable opportunity to expand trade relations and identify new areas of cooperation."

He also expressed satisfaction over the presence of a Mazandarani in the co-presidency of the Iran-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce, describing this as an opportunity to strengthen economic ties and facilitate cooperation between the private sectors of the two countries.

Referring to last year's visit of a Mazandaran delegation to Uzbekistan, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Iran assessed that visit as positive and constructive and said: "The trend of trade cooperation between the two sides is increasingly expanding, and there are suitable grounds for further development of these relations."

Emphasizing the need for continued bilateral consultations, Nasriyev announced intensive planning for visits by officials in the next two to three months and stated: "In this framework, planning for a visit to Uzbekistan and inviting the Governor of Mazandaran to travel to this country is on the agenda so that the ground can be further prepared for strengthening economic and trade cooperation."

He also referred to interactions between Mazandaran Province and Uzbekistan's Fergana Province and considered the exchange of trade delegations between the two regions an effective step toward developing economic relations, emphasizing the importance of continuing these ties to identify investment opportunities and expand trade exchanges.

In conclusion, the Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Iran once again expressed gratitude for the hosting and hospitality of Mazandaran officials and expressed hope that, with continued communication among officials, chambers of commerce, and private-sector actors, economic and trade cooperation between Mazandaran and Uzbekistan would enter a broader stage.

In late September, Mehr News Agency reported that Uzbekistan's \$1.4 billion food market is open to Iranian exporters as trade between the two countries reached \$305 million in the first half of 2026, and three cooperation documents were recently signed.

According to this report, Uzbekistan is becoming one of Central Asia's growing markets, as its food imports in the first quarter of 2026 jumped by nearly 46% to \$1.4 billion. Yet Iran's share of this market remains limited, and economic actors believe that expanding Iran's food industry exports to Tashkent requires resolving financial and transportation obstacles and gaining a more accurate understanding of the market.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has pursued its foreign trade development path more rapidly, and growth in imports, increased foreign investment, and expanded ties with regional markets have made the country one of Central Asia's notable markets.

According to the latest statistics from Uzbekistan's National Statistics Committee, the country's imports in the first quarter of 2026 reached \$12.2 billion. Among these,



food products and live animals, with a share of about \$1.4 billion, were one of the main import groups. Notably, imports in this group grew by 45.9% compared with the same period last year.

These figures show that Uzbekistan's food market is not merely a domestic consumer market; given the country's population of more than 37 million and its position as one of Central Asia's trade hubs, it could become more important for regional food exporters.

Meanwhile, Iran's commercial attaché in Uzbekistan, referring to more than \$280 million in trade between the two countries in the first five months of this year, cited agricultural exports, technological cooperation, and joint investment as key pillars for expanding Iran-Uzbekistan trade.

According to IRNA, citing the Iran Trade Promotion Organization, Rahmatollah Khorrami said, emphasizing the growing trend of trade cooperation between the two countries: Follow-ups by the agriculture ministries of Iran and Uzbekistan paved the way for sending a 120-member delegation headed by the Minister of Agriculture and a group of activists and experts in agriculture, aquaculture, machinery, and processing industries to Uzbekistan.

He described Uzbekistan as one of the most populous countries in Central Asia and added: Uzbekistan ranks second among Iran's export destinations among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and has considerable capacity for expanding trade relations with Iran. Meanwhile, agriculture is one of the priority areas in developing trade between the two countries.

Referring to Iran-Uzbekistan trade figures, Khorrami stated: In the first five months of this year, the trade volume between the two countries reached about \$280 million. During this period, despite regional conditions and their impact on Iran's trade activities, we did not see a decline in exchanges with Uzbekistan, and we hope that with continued dispatch and hosting of trade delegations and stronger ties between the two countries' economic actors, the trade growth trend will continue in the coming months.

Iran's commercial attaché in Uzbekistan described food security as another important area of cooperation between the two countries and said: In the Uzbek government structure, a Food Security Agency has been established with the aim of ensuring and improving food security in areas such as livestock, poultry, quarantine, and food products, which can provide a basis for developing specialized and commercial cooperation between Iran and Uzbekistan.

Citing some of Iran's agricultural export advantages to Uzbekistan, he noted: Currently, products such as citrus fruits, apples, kiwis, pistachios, dates, dairy products, powdered milk, and fish feed are exported from Iran to Uzbekistan, and given the capacity of this country's market, there is also room to expand and diversify Iran's export basket.

Khorrami also addressed the potential for technological cooperation and said: About 30 projects worth \$770 million in various fields, including agriculture, are being implemented in Uzbekistan by Iranian companies, which indicates the considerable capacity of Iran's private sector to enter the Uzbek market.

In conclusion, Iran's commercial attaché in Uzbekistan considered the holding of specialized meetings and increased interaction among officials and economic actors of the two countries in various fields, especially agriculture, as paving the way for developing mutual cooperation and increasing the volume of Iran-Uzbekistan trade.

TCCIMA energy committee chairman raises 6 demands to facilitate exports

TEHRAN- Saeed Tajik, Chairman of the Energy and Environment Committee of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Iran Quality and Standard Inspection Company, at the 30th National Export Day ceremony, raised six demands from the 14th government and emphasized the need to end the "neither war nor peace" situation and to use upcoming opportunities to develop exports.

The government's exit from the pricing process and the exchange of export proceeds, the removal of currency contracting, and the elimination of non-tariff export barriers were among the demands he raised.

The Chairman of the Board of Iran Quality and Standard Inspection Company took the podium at the National Export Day ceremony, held at the Summit Hall, as one of the country's selected exporters for the year 1405, and, in the presence of President Masoud Pezeshkian, addressed the need to remove export barriers.

In his remarks, Saeed Tajik described the past year as one of the hardest years the country has experienced in the last 50 years and said: "The resilience of Iranians in the conditions of crisis and the Ramadan war is one of the wonders of the world in 2026."

Referring to the costs imposed on the country during the war, he said: "The resistance of the Iranian nation and the armed forces in this period has caused people and trade parties in different parts of the world to speak with greater respect about Iran and Iranians. Now that the world has realized Iran's importance more than before and the country has borne heavy costs, this exceptional opportunity must be used for Iran's return to the global economic cycle."

He, stating that "the 14th government is at a historical juncture," emphasized the need to use the opportunities ahead and called for an end to the neither-



war-nor-peace situation.

He added: "This situation must end so that we, the economic soldiers, can demonstrate Iran's economic authority and export capacity on the global stage. Until we return to the world economic cycle, the government's budget deficit will not be resolved, inflation will not be curbed, the exchange rate will not be controlled, and the country's trade balance will remain defective, disrupted, and unbalanced."

The Chairman of the Energy and Environment Commission of the Tehran Chamber enumerated three main obstacles to the development of exports of Iranian goods and services and said: "Sanctions and restrictions on access to the international trade system; domestic policies and regulations restricting exports, referred to as 'domestic sanctions'; and weakness in competitiveness and compliance with the requirements of target markets are among these obstacles."

Tajik, explaining the effects of sanctions and restrictions on access to the international trade system, referred to sudden export bans, currency contracting, and government intervention in pricing the foreign currency obtained from exports and its exchange, and said: "What concept and achievement has the limit and ceiling on commercial cards for exports had other than increasing the number of rented cards?"

Iran, Tajikistan private sector ties strengthened with tripartite chamber memorandum

TEHRAN- A tripartite cooperation memorandum was signed among the Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture of Khorasan Razavi Province, the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, and the Chamber of Commerce of Khatlon Province.

According to a Thursday report by IRNA from the Khorasan Razavi Governorate, the memorandum was concluded with the aim of developing trade relations, facilitating communication among economic actors, identifying investment opportunities, and expanding private-sector cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan.

The signing of this memorandum is considered a step toward strengthening economic cooperation, increasing trade exchanges, and paving the way for the implementation of joint projects between economic actors of the two countries.

TEHRAN- The head of Iran's Tea Organization said: Dry tea production in the country has reached 26,500 tons since the beginning of this year's harvesting season, showing a 23 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

Habib Jahansaz from the Ministry of Agriculture added: The harvesting season of tea gardens in Gilan and Mazandaran provinces is nearing its end in the fourth plucking, and with the continuation of the harvesting and processing of green tea leaves, dry tea production will increase until the end of the season.

The head of the country's Tea Organization, referring to the purchase of about 118,000 tons

of green tea leaves from tea growers so far, stated: Of the total green tea leaves purchased, about 45 percent was first grade and 55 percent was second grade, and the value of this purchase amounts to more than 4,177 billion toman.

Jahansaz said: About 70 percent of the guaranteed purchase of green tea leaves is the government's share, and nearly 90 percent is the share of tea processing factories.

He emphasized the government's support for domestic tea production and stated: In past years, the government has supported tea growers by undertaking part of the guaranteed purchase of green tea leaves, so that

Tajik then stated that "the country's export process does not have the required quality due to restrictions" and added: "The problem of acceptance of quality conformity and standard certificates for Iranian goods in destination countries still persists. Iran's inspection, testing, and certification network must still be approved by destination countries, and this problem has caused non-tariff barriers such as standard certificates, quarantine, and similar measures to obstruct exports, despite the signing of preferential trade agreements with many countries, including the Eurasian Union, and the removal of tariffs on many goods."

The Chairman of the Energy and Environment Committee of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture considered another problem of the country's exports to be the Law on Combating the Smuggling of Goods and Currency in the current and wartime conditions and stated: "In this law, the boundary between intentional smuggling, document deficiencies, or delays caused by conditions is not clear, and this situation sometimes causes economic actors to be identified as violators."

Tajik, stating that "today, transportation restrictions, customs, and technical and quality controls of Iranian goods in target markets are more evident than ever," noted: "If national determi-

nation is formed to support the issuance of guarantees, economic diplomacy, and international recognition of Iran's conformity assessment system, technical and engineering services can become the main driver of the trade balance and the flag-bearer of Iran's credibility and quality in international and regional markets."

He referred to the testing, inspection, and certification (TIC) industry as one of the fields of technical and engineering services that plays an important role in ensuring quality, safety, health, and trust in international trade, and called for the assistance of the Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade in amending ISIC codes.

He continued by criticizing the neglect of "technical and engineering services" in support systems and proposed six demands to facilitate exports, including "suspension of the Law on Combating the Smuggling of Goods and Currency in wartime conditions" and "the government's exit from the pricing process and the exchange of export proceeds." Tajik also emphasized the necessity of determining commodity priorities for the allocation and exchange of exporters' foreign currency, removing currency contracting for exporters, and eliminating the complicated bureaucracy of order registration for importers.

He listed strengthening the capacity of export management companies with the aim of improving the quality of export processes among his other demands and called for recognition of technical and engineering services companies as service producers in the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). Removing non-tariff export barriers, including through concluding bilateral agreements and accepting standard certificates issued in Iran in target countries, was among the other demands of the Head of the Energy and Environment Commission of the Tehran Chamber at the ceremony.

The head of Khatlon Province of Tajikistan, while thanking the Khorasan Razavi delegation for attending this international event, expressed satisfaction with the significant activity of Iranian entrepreneurs and investors in Tajikistan and the signing of fruitful memoranda between the two countries, and emphasized the necessity of practical implementation of these agreements.

Davlatlali Said also, referring to Khatlon's capacities in cotton production, agriculture, textile industries, transportation and logistics, tourism, and food industries, emphasized benefiting from the experiences and technical and engineering capabilities of Khorasan Razavi, especially in the field of water resources management and the development of irrigation systems.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Dry tea production increases 23%

the production of this product would be economically viable.

The head of the country's Tea Organization acknowledged: Managing tea imports and improving the quality of domestically produced green tea leaves and their processing have provided the ground for increasing the competitiveness of Iranian tea with foreign products.

He continued: Currently, reputable Iranian tea brands are present in the market, and part of domestic production is exported to foreign markets.

Jahansaz said: The country's tea is exported to about 37 countries worldwide, and this year's export volume may differ from last year with the aim of allocat-

ing a larger share of production to the domestic market.

Regarding the country's need to import dry tea, he added: The country's annual need for importing this product is estimated at about 50,000 tons, and imports are carried out in accordance with the country's needs and using the exchange rate.

The head of the country's Tea Organization stated the annual production capacity of dry tea in the country as about 30,000 tons and stated: Considering the continuation of production until the end of the harvesting season, the final production statistics for this year will be determined after the completion of harvesting and processing.

Kushner’s hacked iPhone exposed billions in secret Saudi and Emirati money

From page 1 ▶ Cole’s excerpt, published October 22 in Vanity Fair, starts with a GRU operative who specialized in stolen bank data. The Dutch MIVD learned he was headed for Britain, got London’s permission to seize him on arrival, and gave him a choice between working for The Hague and facing espionage charges.

He chose The Hague. In late 2017, he opened a GRU server in Rostov, where the Dutch found screenshots of Kushner’s iPhone X.

The MIVD reverse-engineered the Russian break-in. By early 2018 its team could watch Kushner’s screen whenever he used the phone.

Dutch press reported they spent years inside the Cozy Bear hacking group and fed the Americans warnings. This time the target worked in the White House.

Alpha, Beta and a defense fund

On that screen, Cole writes, was a First Abu Dhabi Bank account that Kushner signed for but did not own.

It belonged to the Watani Al Emarat Foundation, a state-funded Emirati “charity” that Cole says doubled as cover for covert weapons purchases abroad.

Roughly \$750 million in cash reportedly entered through Azerbaijan, a channel that Cole says was used to conceal the money’s origins in the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf.

The ruling Arab families had initially floated a fund exceeding \$10 billion to advance Trump’s foreign policy agenda, before settling on accounts for Kushner. “Jared was looking for



shortcuts in his diplomacy,” one source told Cole.

A second account, Beta, allegedly held about \$1 billion in Israel’s Central Bank by spring 2018. Netanyahu supposedly demanded notice of any transfer, relayed through Ambassador David Friedman, and much of the money later went to Cyprus.

A third deposit was reportedly earmarked for Israeli assistance to the UAE in countering Iran. Cole says the Dutch probably saw only Alpha. In return for these financial commitments, Kushner backed Abu Dhabi and Riyadh’s regional demands from inside the White House and helped negotiate a secret defense pact committing Israeli military aid to provide military backing to the UAE.

Four senior Trump officials, among them two national security advisers, a chief of staff and a former CIA director, told Cole they knew of no presidential approval for Kushner to use a foreign government account.

A former Mueller prosecutor told him any promise made in return for the money could

break bribery and foreign agent laws. House Oversight Democrats say Kushner must answer before the American people.

A marketplace and Iran across the table

In 2018, The Intercept reported that Mohammed bin Salman bragged to Mohamed bin Zayed that Kushner was “in his pocket.”

Months after leaving office, Kushner took \$2 billion from the Saudi sovereign fund for Affinity Partners, over a screening panel’s finding that its due diligence was “unsatisfactory in all aspects.” Rep. Jamie Raskin has since put Affinity’s assets at \$6.16 billion.

Cole’s account paints a stark picture of how Washington, Tel Aviv and the Arab monarchies in the Persian Gulf operate behind closed doors.

Israel wanted “normalization” with the Arab states on its own terms. Mohamed bin Zayed and his Israeli allies wanted the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) blown up. Mohammed bin Salman wanted the crown.

Kushner, an unpaid White House adviser with signing

rights on an Emirati account, sat at the center of all three demands. Trump pulled out of the Iran deal in May 2018, in the very months the Dutch say they were watching that account.

On the book’s account, the strategy against Iran and the wider Resistance ran on secret slush funds, dark money and a corruption so routine that one source told Cole the Arab rulers in the Persian Gulf spend a billion or two on such arrangements every year.

The reports in Cole’s book date from Trump’s first term. In the second, the money may no longer need hidden accounts, because it moves through deals in plain view.

A \$2 billion Emirati investment was tied to the Trump family’s USD1 stablecoin. Steve Witkoff met Tahnoon Bin Zayed on a yacht off Sardinia, and months later the White House moved to ease AI chip exports to Tahnoon’s G42.

David Sacks, the administration’s AI and crypto czar, received an ethics waiver to join those talks despite earlier fund ties to Persian Gulf investors. Tahnoon is the same man who chaired First Abu Dhabi Bank when, Cole says, the Alpha account was filling up.

What has emerged is a marketplace where Saudi and Emirati money, Israeli strategic interests and a president’s son-in-law met behind closed doors and conspired.

That same son-in-law is now a White House envoy deeply involved in Washington’s regional misadventures, including the war on Iran. Tehran has every reason to ask who he really works for.

Palestinian fighters kill 2 Israeli soldiers in fierce Al-Khalil confrontation

TEHRAN — Two Palestinian fighters from Al-Khalil (Hebron) held off Israeli troops for more than 20 minutes on Friday morning, killing two occupying soldiers before they were martyred at the Farsh al-Hawa checkpoint on the city’s northern edge.

The fighters were Hamouda and Firas al-Jaabah, both 27, from the same family, each married with two children. Shortly after 7:30 a.m., they stepped out of their car at the junction Israel calls “Judea Junction” and opened fire on a Home Front Command unit.

The army named its dead as Staff Sgt. Ron Yonatan Roytman and Sgt. Yuval Shai Svilem and admitted to three lightly wounded, though early Hebrew-media reports counted six wounded. The Israeli military concedes it had no warning.

Hamas called it a “heroic operation” without claiming it. In its statement, the movement described the attack as the living embodiment of a steadfast people’s will and a message that resistance will only grow stronger until the occupation is driven from the land and the holy sites.

It described the operation as the natural, legitimate answer to the occupation’s crimes in the West Bank and al-Quds (Jerusalem) and its continuing war on Gaza.

Hamas also called for total mobilization in every city, village and camp to ignite the ground beneath settlers and invaders. Every Palestinian who bears arms, it said, should aim them at soldiers and settlers.

The al-Qassam Brigades praised the attack, Islamic Jihad’s al-Quds Brigades urged further confrontation, and the PFLP and DFLP welcomed it. Hezbollah saluted Hamouda and Firas and described the operation as a response to Israeli killing, genocide, destruction and desecration of holy sites.

Netanyahu arrived in Al-Khalil (Hebron) with War Minister Israel Katz and announced what the city would get. “We will act to destroy this place,” he said, promising to evacuate the neighborhood, search house to house, and apply the method used



in the northern refugee camps, whose destruction displaced thousands in 2025.

Katz put it in these words: “The Jenin refugee camp model arrives in Hebron.” By afternoon, bulldozers were working, and a soldier gave one housing complex five minutes to get out.

Residents told Reuters the homes had no connection to the attackers. Hebron and Halhul sit under cordon, the Ibrahimi Mosque has been shut and its staff expelled, according to the Palestinian Awqaf Ministry, and relatives of the martyrs were arrested.

Involved in the campaign while the elections are close, Netanyahu also floated an operation “on a scale unseen since the Six-Day War,” then trimmed his full West Bank closure to a cordon around two cities.

He accused Israel’s enemies of timing attacks to sway the vote. The territory was due to be sealed for Tuesday’s election anyway.

Bezael Smotrich ordered demolitions, and he and Itamar Ben-Gvir demanded the Palestinian Authority be dismantled.

Hebron has lived under this logic since 1994, when a settler massacred worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque and Israel’s answer was to hand settlers half of it and split the city.

Smotrich moved this year to revoke parts of the Hebron agreements. Palestinian monitors logged 647 settler attacks in September alone.

King Fahd Airport, Defense Ministry attacked as US tells diplomats to leave Saudi Arabia

From page 1 ▶ In a separate incident, two people were killed and two others were wounded on Wednesday when a drone was intercepted over Aramco’s Shaybah oil field, also in the Eastern Province. Falling drone fragments sparked a fire in a contractor’s vehicle, killing a Filipino and a Nepali, the Saudi Energy Ministry said.

The Ansarallah’s military spokesman, Yahya Saree, said they had also targeted the Saudi Defense Ministry’s headquarters building in the capital, Riyadh, an Aramco facility in the Red Sea city of Yanbu, and Abha International Airport in the south of the country.

The Ansarallah also reiterated on Thursday that they had attacked Saudi Arabia in retaliation for deadly Saudi air strikes on the territory they control in western Yemen.

The Ansarallah have been pummeling Saudi Arabia’s aviation and energy infrastructure for weeks, killing at least 22 civilians and roiling energy markets.

The price of oil jumped about 3 percent on Thursday, with the global benchmark topping \$112 a barrel, the highest level since

mid-May. Saudi Arabia announced a bombing campaign against the Ansarallah in support of its puppet government in Yemen, which has been at war with the Ansarallah since 2014. That was when the Ansarallah seized the Yemeni capital, Sanaa — which they still hold.

A fragile truce in Yemen unraveled earlier this year. The war resurfaced after Saudi Arabia bombarded Sanaa airport and refused to lift the blockade of their territory.

As the fighting has spilled onto Saudi soil, the United States ordered all “non-emergency government employees and their family members” to leave Saudi Arabia, a State Department spokesman, Tommy Pigott, said in social media post on Wednesday night.

Washington had pulled many diplomatic staff out of the Middle East earlier this year after the start of the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran. But it started sending some back in late August.

Then in September, the Ansarallah seized areas of strategic territory on Yemen’s Red Sea coast in a lightning offensive, gaining greater control



over a crucial choke point for global trade.

The Red Sea has become an increasingly important route for Saudi oil exports since Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway in the Persian Gulf, after the United States and Israel attacked Iran in late February. The Ansarallah’s attacks on Saudi oil facilities and tankers traversing the Red Sea have heaped further pressure on energy markets.

Saudi Arabia, under Mohammed bin Salman, seems adept at getting his country into trouble. In March 2015, when he was serving as defense minister, he ordered an attack on Yemen, expecting to restore the Sau-

di-backed Yemeni government within weeks and defeat Ansarallah. Instead, he opened Pandora’s box. More than a decade later, the consequences of that decision continue to haunt Riyadh, and it is difficult to imagine the Saudi capital remaining immune to the repercussions of the conflict.

He reopened old wounds when Saudi Arabia bombed Sanaa airport on July 13 in an attempt to prevent a plane carrying a Yemeni delegation from Tehran from landing. The delegation had participated in the funeral procession of Iranian Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in a U.S.-Israeli air raid on his office and residence on February 28.

Six killed in attack at church in Jordan

Six people were killed and 28 injured on Friday when gunmen opened fire during a funeral at a church in Jordan’s Karak governorate, the country’s Public Security Directorate said in a statement.

Security forces had been deployed to the church and were pursuing the suspects, the state-owned Al-Mamlaka television station reported. It said gunmen got out of a vehicle and opened fire during a funeral procession at the Hamoud Church in Karak. Al-Mamlaka previously reported seven had been killed in the attack.



A video aired on Al-Mamlaka that appeared to be from a security camera

mounted on the church showed three people firing on the church from a sidewalk and hiding behind trees and a low wall, before running towards the church’s entrance.

Khaled Burqan, a man who had been attending the funeral, told Al-Mamlaka that dozens of people had been attending the funeral and at least two men — one carrying a rifle and another carrying a pistol — opened fire on them for several minutes.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, and Jordanian authorities did not say who was responsible.

Iranian Leader office hosts youth development program in New Delhi



By staff writer

TEHRAN — The Office of the Representative of Iran’s Leader of the Islamic Revolution in India convened university students, scholars, and professionals at the Iran Culture House in New Delhi for the inaugural Young Muslim 360° educational program on October 21.

Conceived under the academic leadership of Dr. Syed Mohammad Ali Aon Naqvi, the initiative addressed the intellectual and ethical challenges facing contemporary Muslim youth by aligning traditional Islamic scholarship with modern academic frameworks.

Prominent figures attended the gathering, including Ayatullah Dr. Abdul Majid Hakimelahi, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution’s representative in India, alongside Maulana Syed Abul Qasim Rizvi and retired DIG Syed Jamal Taha.

Discussions centered on six core areas,

ranging from digital literacy and intellectual confidence to professional ethics and personal responsibility. Rather than treating religion and modern technology as separate spheres, the curriculum framed them as integrated components of daily life.

Organizers implemented a 30-day structured online mentoring schedule for the event. This follow-up mechanism utilizes personalized digital dashboards, reflective exercises, and progress tracking to guide participants through practical applications of the workshop material.

By combining seminary traditions with university-level inquiry, the initiative aims to build a sustainable model for youth development across India.

The office plans to expand these educational efforts into other major Indian cities, aiming to cultivate principled leadership, intellectual resilience, and constructive citizenship among younger generations.

Para swimmers win gold, bronze

TEHRAN – Iranian swimmers Abolfazl Zarif and Abolfazl Malek Oladi delivered an impressive performance in the Men's 100m Backstroke S9 at the 2026 Asia, winning gold and bronze medals for Iran.

Zarif claimed the gold medal with a winning time of 1:04.26, demonstrating his strength and speed in the pool. Indonesia's Jendi Pangabeau secured the silver medal, finishing second in 1:05.10.

Meanwhile, Malek Oladi completed the podium for Iran, taking bronze with a time of 1:07.88.

The achievement highlighted Iran's strong showing in para swimming, as both athletes proudly represented their country on the continental stage.

Women’s sitting volleyball runners-up at 2026 Nagoya

TEHRAN – Iran's women's sitting volleyball team won the silver medal at the 2026 Asian Para Games after losing to China in the final.

The Iranian team fought hard against their Chinese opponents but ultimately suffered a 3–0 defeat.

China secured victory with set scores of 25–22, 25–20 and 25–12 to claim the gold medal.

Despite missing out on the top prize, Iran's silver-medal finish marked a significant achievement for the team at the continental competition. The result highlighted the players' determination and competitive spirit as they represented their country on the Asian stage, earning a place on the podium.

Iranian discus throwers sweep podium

TEHRAN – Iranian athletes delivered an impressive performance in the men's F11 discus throw at the 2026 Asian Para Games on Friday, securing all three podium places and showcasing the country's strength in para-athletics.

Mahdi Olad led the all-Iranian podium, capturing the gold medal with a throw of 40.65 meters. His compatriot Hassan Bajoulvand claimed the silver medal after recording a distance of 40.43 meters, while Amirhossein Alipour completed the clean sweep by finishing third with a throw of 36.54 meters.

Olad's winning mark gave him the top spot in the event, with Bajoulvand finishing just 22 centimeters behind his teammate in a closely contested battle for the gold medal. Alipour's performance secured the bronze medal, ensuring that Iranian athletes occupied all three positions on the podium.

The result highlighted Iran's strong showing in the F11 discus throw, an event for athletes with visual impairments. The Iranian trio's achievement added another notable performance to the country's campaign at the continental para-sport competition.

By sweeping the gold, silver and bronze medals, Olad, Bajoulvand and Alipour underscored the depth of Iranian talent in the discipline and brought a memorable result for the national delegation at the 2026 Asian Para Games.

Men’s wheelchair basketball bag silver

TEHRAN – Iran's men's wheelchair basketball team finished in second place at the 2026 Asian Para Games.

On Friday, Team Melli lost to Japan 55–47 in the match held at the Aichi International Arena.

Iran defeated Iraq 81–23, South Korea 67–62 and the Philippines 45–71 in Group B.

Iran also beat Kuwait 110–43 and Thailand 83–50 ahead of the final.

Shot putters Nikoei Majd, Beigrezaei win gold and silver in 2026 Nagoya

TEHRAN – Mehran Nekoei Majd and Mohammad-taha Beigrezaei from Iran claimed a gold and silver medal at the Men's Shot Put F34 of the 2026 Asian Para Games on Friday.

Nekoei Majd came first with a throw of 11.90, followed by his compatriot Beigrezaei with 11.79 meters.

Qatari shot putter Abdulrahman Fiqi won the bronze medal with 10.49 meters.

Iran blind football win bronze

TEHRAN – Iran blind football team defeated Thailand 2-1 to win a bronze medal in the 2026 Asian Para Games on Friday.

Hossein Rajabpour and Morteza Karimi scored for Iran, while Kittikorn Badoee scored for Thailand.

Team Melli had opened the campaign with a 1-0 loss against Thailand.

Japan and China will lock horn together in the final match.

Beit Sayah takes gold in 2026 Asian Para Games javelin

TEHRAN – Iranian javelin thrower Sadegh Beit Sayah won a gold medal in the 2026 Asian Para Games on Friday.

He finished in first place in the Men's Javelin Throw F40/F41 with a throw of 45.78 meters.

Silver medal went to Indonesian Ansyari with 43.55 and Indian Navdeep seized a bronze with 42.55.

Zare snatches gold at 2026 Asian Para Games

TEHRAN – Iran celebrated another success at the 2026 Asian Para Games as Alireza Zare captured gold in the men's 200m T35 event.

Zare crossed the finish line in 24.83 seconds to claim the top spot on the podium.

Iraq's Mohammed Khalaf finished second in 25.60 seconds, followed by compatriot Idrees Al Zaidi, who took bronze in 26.02 seconds.

Safarzadeh takes gold in women’s 400m at Asian Para Games

TEHRAN — Iranian sprinter Hajar Safarzadeh won the gold medal in the women's 400m T12 at the 2026 Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games on Thursday, setting a new Games record.

Safarzadeh delivered an outstanding performance in the final, clocking 56.43 seconds to finish first and secure the gold medal in the event.

The Iranian athlete competed against runners from Uzbekistan, India and China, once again demonstrating her strength in the women's T12 category.

With her winning time of 56.43 seconds, Safarzadeh broke the Asian Para Games record she had set earlier in the preliminary round, when she clocked 57.27 seconds to finish first in her heat and qualify for the final.

India's Tejalben Damor claimed the silver medal with a time of 57.60 seconds, while China's Shen Yaqin took bronze in 58.04 seconds.

Safarzadeh's record-breaking performance added another gold medal to Iran's campaign at the Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games, highlighting the country's continued success in para athletics.

Golmohammadi appointed Iran’s U23 football team head coach

TEHRAN – Yahya Golmohammadi has officially been appointed head coach of Iran's U23 national football team following the termination of his contract with Iraqi club Duhok.

Hours after the termination of his contract with the Iraqi side, the Football Federation of Iran announced Golmohammadi's appointment to lead the U23 national team.

Hossein Abdi was the most recent coach of Iran's U23 team but stepped down after the team's group-stage elimination at the Nagoya Asian Games.

Golmohammadi has previously coached several Iranian clubs, including Saba Battery, Zob Ahan and Persepolis.

The 55-year-old coach enjoyed considerable success with Persepolis, winning multiple Persian Gulf Pro League titles and leading the Tehran-based club to the final of the AFC Champions League.

Golmohammadi will now take charge of Iran's U23 national team as the Team look to strengthen their preparations for upcoming international competitions.

Spouses of six countries’ ambassadors named honorary tourism envoys of Hamadan

TEHRAN – The spouses of ambassadors from Denmark, Romania, Mexico, Uruguay, Nicaragua and Armenia, along with Romania's ambassador to Iran, have been named honorary ambassadors for cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts in Iran's western province of Hamadan.

The initiative, held in cooperation with Iran's Foreign Ministry, aims to introduce Hamadan's historical and cultural attractions to international audiences and strengthen cultural ties and tourism cooperation between Iran and other countries.

Speaking at the ceremony on Wednesday, Mohammadreza Akbari, head of the Hamadan Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said cultural heritage could transcend geographical borders, linguistic differences and national identities, serving as a common language that brings nations closer together.

He described Hamadan as a province with thousands of years of history, valuable historical monuments, rich cultural traditions and considerable potential in tourism and handicrafts.

Akbari said these assets form part of Iran's civilizational identity and the shared heritage of human-



ity, adding that introducing them to international audiences could improve mutual understanding and pave the way for greater cultural and tourism cooperation.

According to Akbari, cooperation with diplomatic figures could help introduce foreign audiences to the province's historical landmarks, local arts, handicrafts and cultural traditions.

He also emphasized that developing international tourism requires more than historical monuments and natural attractions,

noting that effective promotion, sustained international engagement and cooperation between cultural and tourism institutions are equally important.

Akbari expressed hope that the initiative would mark the beginning of lasting cooperation between Hamadan and the six countries, contributing to cultural understanding, friendly relations and the preservation of shared human heritage.

Hamadan, often described as the historical and civilizational

capital of Iran, is home to a range of archaeological, historical and natural attractions.

Among its best-known sites are the ancient city of Ecbatana, the Ganjnameh inscriptions and waterfall, Ali Sadr Cave, the mausoleums of Avicenna and Baba Taher, and the Alavian Dome, to name a few.

The province is also home to Lalejin, internationally recognized for its pottery-making tradition, which has made it one of Iran's leading handicrafts centers.

Experts highlight Lut Desert geopark bid, Kerman’s geological and natural attractions



however, mention that some of those UNESCO sites are shared with other nearby provinces.

Despite its vast size and exceptional range of natural, geological, historical, cultural, religious and spiritual attractions, the province attracts only about 0.7% of Iran's tourists, although it accounts for around 11% of the country's territory, he said.

Mohammadi, who holds a doctorate in paleontology, outlined several potential benefits of securing Global Geopark status for the Lut Desert.

He said the designation could strengthen the desert's international profile and bring its important geological sites under a more integrated management framework.

It could also encourage sustainable geotourism, support the development of scientific and nature-based tourism routes, and persuade visitors to spend more time in the region by offering a wider range of experiences.

According to Mohammadi, the initiative could generate employment and strengthen the local economy by creating opportunities for tour guides, traditional accommodation providers, transport services, handicraft producers and other local businesses.

He also emphasized the importance of expanding scientific research and education, particularly in geology and geomorphology, while increasing local communities' participation in

protecting the region's natural heritage and benefiting from tourism.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mohammadi suggested that a geopark could help improve conservation across the Lut Desert by establishing stronger management links among its prominent geological sites and reducing damage caused by uncontrolled tourism and inappropriate use of natural resources.

Developing a unified tourism destination would also help promote the Kaluts of Shahdad alongside other geological attractions through complementary routes and visitor experiences, he added.

The initiative could further strengthen Kerman's international tourism brand, raise awareness of its natural and geological assets, and expand scientific and international cooperation.

Mohammadi also stressed that sustainable development in the region would depend on directing tourism toward environmental protection, distributing its economic benefits among local communities and adopting scientific and participatory management practices.

He also highlighted the need for a comprehensive conservation and tourism plan, systematic documentation of geological sites, public education and cooperation between responsible institutions and local residents.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Iran calls for nationwide oral history program across all 31 provinces

TEHRAN – Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts has called for a national program to record and document oral history across all 31 provinces, saying the initiative is essential to preserving the country's historical and cultural memory.

Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks in a message issued to mark the opening of the ministry's first practical training workshop on oral history. The message was read by Gholamreza Zarifian, head of the council for oral history policy, at the workshop's opening ceremony, Mehr news agency reported on Thursday.

Salehi-Amiri described oral history as a means of documenting, analyzing and safeguarding a nation's collective memory, stressing the importance of systematically recording experiences, knowledge, accounts and developments related to cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts.

“Future generations will build Iran's tomorrow based on recording the developments of today,” he



said in the message.

He said expanding oral history projects to all 31 provinces was a strategic necessity for protecting Iran's historical, cultural and social heritage and developing a more complete national account of changes in the three sectors.

Much of the knowledge and experience associated with these fields, he noted, has developed within local and regional communities. Failure to document such material could result in the loss of

an important part of the country's historical wealth.

The minister stressed that oral history should not be confined to the ministry's central administration, a handful of provinces or widely known historical accounts. Instead, he called for a nationwide program implemented in stages and tailored to the capacities and characteristics of each province.

Achieving this goal would require a common scientific methodology and a coordinated nation-

al framework, allowing provinces to document their distinctive experiences and narratives while following shared research standards, the message said.

Key measures would include developing national oral history guidelines, identifying research priorities, selecting significant interviewees, establishing appropriate sampling methods and using standardized interview guides.

The process should also include accurate recording and transcription of interviews, verification of information, documentation of sources, expert review, preservation of original files and the creation of standardized metadata, according to the message.

Salehi-Amiri also highlighted the need to train provincial researchers and interviewers and strengthen cooperation among provincial offices, universities, research centers, professional associations and local cultural institutions.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Health Insurance Week to highlight ‘health along path of life’

TEHRAN – Under the theme “Health Along the Path of Life,” National Health Insurance Week will be held from October 24 to 30, focusing on “Innovation and Transformation in the Basic Health Insurance System: Shifting from Treatment-Oriented to Health-Oriented Care.”

The themes for each day of the week are as follows:

* Saturday, October 24: National Consensus and Universal Health Insurance for Health Equity

* Sunday, October 25: From Government Support to Philanthropic Contributions: Ensuring Sustainable Support for Patients with Hard-to-Treat Diseases

* Monday, October 26: Data Mining and Smart Monitoring to Safeguard Resources and Ensure Families’ Financial Protection

* Tuesday, October 27: Smart Innovation, Transparency, and Easy Access to Services

* Wednesday, October 28: Health Literacy, Family Physicians, and Sustainable Prevention Through Public Participation

* Thursday, October 29: Joining Forces with the National Health Team for a Healthier Nation

* Friday, October 30: Supporting People from Healthy Childhood to Healthy Aging

According to the health ministry, the Health Insurance Organization covers about two million patients with rare and hard-to-treat diseases.

All resident and non-resident foreign nationals with legal stay in Iran must have basic health insurance coverage under a new Cabinet of Ministers enactment.

To safeguard the patients’ health and lower financial burden on households, tens of specialized healthcare service packages have been defined for them, with some more being continuously developed. The packages include diagnostic, therapeutic, pharmaceutical, rehabilitation, and dental services, whether in the form of outpatient or inpatient services, which are provided with minimal deductibles or free of charge.

In 2024, seven more anti-cancer drugs were added to the list of rare diseases fund, with health insurance covering 70 percent of the costs.

“Currently, with the inclusion of these seven drugs, a total of 90 anti-cancer drugs are covered by the rare and hard-to-



treat diseases fund, and the health insurance is paying 70 to 95 percent of their costs,” IRIB quoted Kameli, an official with the health insurance organization, as saying.

The number of health centers that have concluded contracts with the Health Insurance Organization increased by seven percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) compared with the year before.

In 2025, more than 53,000 centers concluded contracts with health insurance organizations, IRNA quoted Keivan Tajbakhsh, an official with the Organization, as saying.

Health insurance contracts have been signed with government, non-government, private, and charity centers for services.

The centers include doctors’ offices, hospitals, pharmacies, rehabilitation centers, and all medical centers.

Health Insurance Organization covers about two million patients with rare and hard-to-treat diseases.

“We hope to witness an increase in the number of health centers that are parties to the contract with Health Insurance Organization as new forms of the contract, approved by the Supreme Council of Insurance, are announced,” Tajbakhsh said.

He stated that 13,931 pharmacies, 20,804 doctors’ offices, 2,049 clinics, 2,446 independent laboratories, and 4261 rehabili-

tation centers, both independent and affiliated with other organizations, have concluded contracts with the Health Insurance Organization.

Efforts to enhance intl. cooperation

In August, the head of the Iranian Health Insurance Organization, Mohammad-Mehdi Nasehi, and officials from the International Conference on Public Health (ICOPH) committee explored avenues to enhance collaborations.

The Conference chair, Hema-tram Yadav, and its convener, Isanka Gamage, held a meeting with Iranian officials to discuss ways to boost cooperation in the fields of health insurance research and the exchange of managerial expertise, Borna news agency reported.

The officials met on the sidelines of the 12th International Conference on Public Health (ICOPH) held from August 5th to 7th in Bali, Malaysia. An Iranian delegation led by Nasehi attended the conference.

Lauding Iran’s active participation, Yadav said enhancement of scientific cooperation with Iran would be a valuable opportunity for ICOPH members.

For his part, Nasehi voiced the country’s readiness for the promotion of scientific cooperation with ICOPH. Referring to the scientific and practical capabilities of Asian countries, he stated that fostering ties with universities, research institutes, and health organizations in the ICOPH member states could pave the way for broader scientific, research, and managerial cooperation in health and health insurance sectors.

In May, Iran and Tajikistan signed a memorandum of un-

derstanding (MOU) in the health sector focusing on six parts, including medical education, research, healthcare, treatment, medicine, and health insurance.

According to Nasehi, the MOU was signed on the sidelines of the 18th session of the Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, and Cultural Cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran which was held on May 26, in Dushanbe under the chairmanship of the co-chairs of the commission — Minister of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan Daler Juma and Minister of Energy of the Islamic Republic of Iran Abbas Aliabadi, IRNA reported.

Fostering ties in the health sector, particularly health insurance, is a part of Iran’s six-point roadmap for water diplomacy.

Referring to Iran’s expertise in health insurance, the official said the country’s experiences in implementing health insurance, referral systems, and other fields of health will be shared with Tajikistan through consultation and implementation.

In December 2025, Nasehi and the Minister of Health and Social Protection of Tajikistan, Jamoliddin Abdullozoda, agreed to promote cooperation between the two countries in the field of medical health insurance.

During a meeting held in Tajikistan, the two sides discussed the potential for expanding ties by launching joint investments in the health sector, ihio.gov.ir reported.

For his part, Nasehi announced the organization’s readiness to share experiences with Tajikistan to help strengthen its insurance system.



vices to more than three million students across the country, Qorbani said in January.

World Oral Health Day (WOHD) is celebrated every year on March 20 to empower people with the tools and knowledge to prevent and control oral diseases, which affect nearly 3.5 billion people worldwide.

It encourages people to look after their oral health by adopting a good oral hygiene routine and managing risk factors.

Themed ‘A Happy Mouth Is... A Happy Life’, WOHD 2026 spotlighted oral health as the foundation of lifelong well-being — from a baby’s first teeth to maintaining a healthy smile in older age.

SOCIETY

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Straight Truth

TEHRAN TIMES

7

National event aims to raise public awareness of digital media

TEHRAN – Media and Information Literacy Week is being observed nationwide from October 24 to 30, with the aim of promoting media literacy and raising public awareness of how to engage with media and navigate the digital space.

Media literacy is the skill to distinguish misinformation from truth. It is the practice of taking in media messages and understanding what they are trying to convey via news, movies, and TV programs, analyzing the information, and making informed decisions. It is the ability to remain a critical, thoughtful, and responsible consumer of information.

The Academic Center for Education, Culture, and Research (Jahad-e Daneshgahi), and other cultural and media organizations and institutions are observing the week with a wide range of programs to popularize media literacy and empower audiences to assess the information presented in media and social media, IRNA reported.

The inauguration ceremony of the week kicks off on Saturday, with the head of the National Cyberspace Center delivering a lecture. A media-parenting channel titled ‘Media compass’ on Shad messaging application will be unveiled during the ceremony.

A major conference on ‘media parenting’ is scheduled for Sunday in Alborz province.

National Cyberspace Center has organized a consultative meeting on the role of online platforms and media in enhancing media literacy on Monday, and an educational seminar is planned to be held at Farhangian University on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, the Association of Iran Media Literacy in cooperation with Yasan Academy, an educational academy that uses educational technologies and computational thinking to foster individual skills in children and adolescents, will host a webinar on artificial intelligence (AI) for teachers and media literacy educators.

‘Media literacy and informed citizen’ conference is planned to be held on Thursday and Friday.

Holding training courses for video game narrators by the Iran Computer Games Foundation, and media literacy educators by the Association of Iran Media Literacy and National Cyberspace Center, as well as unveiling ten books on media and information literacy are among other programs considered for the week.

Global Media and Information Literacy Week is marked from October 24 to 31. In 2026, the week is held under the theme ‘We All Play a Part – Media and Information Literacy for the People’, highlighting the power of individuals and communities to make informed decisions, think critically and participate meaningfully in an increasingly complex information landscape. This year, the campaign puts collective action at its heart, bringing together educators, journalists, young people, policymakers, digital creators, parents and civil society across the world.

Significance of media literacy in war

Information literacy and media literacy are among essential tools to confront the



threats posed by foreign media’s psychological operations during wartime, and to ensure the coherence of society.

Media literacy is an expanded conceptualization of literacy that includes the ability to access and analyze media messages as well as create, reflect, and take action, using the power of information and communication to make a difference in the world.

According to Javad Taleschi, the head of the Iranian social work media, psychological operations of foreign media can have adverse effects on society. However, improving information literacy and media literacy in society, through holding educational workshops, creating content, strengthening the national media, and monitoring social media, will help boost social resistance against the threats to society.

Foreign media can carry out psychological operations in different ways, such as broadcasting fake news and rumors, with the aim of demoralizing people and making them feel extremely frightened.

Another way is to distort the facts and spread incomplete or false news to present an unreal image of the war; they may even fuel ethnic and civil conflicts to disunite society.

Another strategy is to weaken people’s trust in the government through unjustified criticism and by spoiling the image of governmental bodies.

Foreign media also attempt to promote foreign cultures and values to weaken the national identity of a country. However, media literacy helps people use critical thinking to evaluate information and news, identify the reliability of news sources, and decide if the information is real.

To be able to use media effectively and safely, media literacy skills have to be improved.

There are different ways to improve this skill among Iranian families. Media education is one of the best ways. The skill can be developed at schools through holding educational workshops for parents.

The national media needs to be strengthened as a powerful, people-centered medium to be able to function as a reliable source of news broadcasting. Families have to be encouraged to use reliable sources such as books, scientific articles, and specialized websites.

Iran opens university doors to Azerbaijani girls facing hijab restrictions

TEHRAN – Iran has invited Azerbaijani girls to pursue higher education at Iranian universities amid restrictions on wearing headscarves in schools in the neighboring country.

In a video message released on Thursday, Iran’s Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Hossein Simaei-Sarraf, announced that Iranian universities were open to Azerbaijani girls seeking to continue their education while observing their religious dress.

“As the minister of science of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I declare that the doors of Iranian universities are open to girls from Azerbaijan who wish to pursue their studies,” he said.

“We can be good hosts to the devout daughters of the Holy Prophet who are being forced to abandon their religious hijab in order to exercise their right to education,” Simaei-Sarraf added.

The invitation comes amid restrictions imposed by Azerbaijani authorities on additional clothing that conflicts with prescribed school uniforms or the secular principles of education. Although the rules do not explicitly mention the hijab, videos circulating online suggest that they target headscarves.

Earlier this month, the Baku City Education Department announced inspections to monitor compliance with the measure among students and teachers. The restrictions have drawn criticism on social media, with users describing them as religious discrimination against the country’s Muslim-majority population.

The measure has also prompted protests, with some teachers reporting that schools had asked them to remove their hijabs or resign.

TEHRAN TIMES



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OCTOBER 24, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

If you gain a blessing, do not refuse it by cool and poor thanks.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:11:49 Evening: 17:36 Dawn: 4:55 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:20 (tomorrow)

Mobarak puppet festival closes with tributes to Minab children, veteran artists

TEHRAN- The 21st Tehran-Mobarak International Puppet Theater Festival concluded in Tehran with a tribute to the children martyred in Minab and honors for two veteran figures in Iranian puppetry, Adel Bezdoudeh and Homa Jeddikar.

The closing ceremony was held at Tehran's City Theater Complex on Thursday, bringing together theater artists and cultural officials to mark the end of the five-day festival, which featured performances for children and young adults, adult audiences, and open-air and inclusive theater programs, Mehr reported on Friday.

A central theme of the ceremony was remembrance of the children killed when the Shajareh Tayyebah school in Minab was struck in a US-Israeli military attack, killing 168 students and other civilians and causing widespread grief in the local community. The festival also introduced a special section titled "Minab's Imaginative Chronicle," using puppetry and theatrical expression to commemorate the children, the report added.

Speaking at the ceremony, Poopak Azim-pour, secretary of the festival, praised the artists whose performances had brought different emotions and perspectives to audiences across Tehran. She expressed hope that children would always have access to imagination and dreams.

Mehdi Shafiei, deputy culture minister for artistic affairs, described puppetry as an art capable of bringing objects to life and giving form to imagination and hope. He said the art form could communicate ideas that people sometimes struggle to express directly.

Shafiei also highlighted the festival's international dimension, noting that performances by foreign artists could help foster cultural dialogue. He pointed to a performance by

Peter Schumann in memory of the children of Minab as an example of how puppetry could serve as a means of artistic expression and solidarity.

He called for puppet theater to become a more regular part of public cultural life rather than being confined to festival periods. He also emphasized the need to expand public performances for adult audiences and revive student puppet theater festivals, which had previously helped nurture artists and productions.

The ceremony honored Homa Jeddikar for her lifetime contribution to puppet theater, recognizing her longstanding professional work in the field.

Adel Bezdoudeh, another prominent figure in Iranian puppet theater, was also honored for his decades of work. Theater director and playwright Marzieh Boroumand recalled their long professional association, highlighting his contributions as a puppet designer and maker, set designer, director, and instructor. Bozdoudeh received a commemorative statuette and certificate.

The non-competitive festival also recognized participating artists and directors across its different sections, including performances for children and young adults, adult theater, and open-air and inclusive productions.

The Tehran-Mobarak International Puppet Theater Festival is one of Iran's established events dedicated to puppetry, bringing together artists and productions that explore the artistic and storytelling possibilities of the form. Beyond entertainment, the festival provides a platform for experimentation, cultural exchange, and engagement with audiences of different ages.

Exhibition from Gaza City art collective opens at Irish Museum of Modern Art

A new exhibition showcasing works by Palestinian art collective Eltiqa has been unveiled today in the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA).

Titled "Eltiqa: How to Work Together," the display showcases work by six Gaza City artists curated by the Question of Funding. It is a collaboration with Art Jameel and tours to IMMA from Jameel Arts Center in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Hot Press reported.

Eltiqa, which is the Arabic word for "encounter," have been operating as an art collective in Gaza for 20 years.

The Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland, Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid, visited IMMA on Thursday for a preview of the exhibit. She shared a statement about the presentation.

"I am grateful to IMMA for hosting and facilitating the Eltiqa Collective's presentation of Palestinian artists from Gaza and their artistic practices at the Irish Museum of Modern Art," she said. "It is wonderful to see 60 works by six Palestinian artists who have managed to sustain this collective despite extraordinary and unimaginable circumstances in Gaza. I hope this exhibition will amplify their voices and convey a powerful message of resilience and hope."

The exhibit features works by Eltiqa artists including Mohammad Al-Hawajri, Raed Issa,

Dina Matar's, Mohamed Abusal, Abdel Raouf Al-Ajouri, and Sohail Salem.

The display features over 60 artworks, which were created between 2002 and 2025. The pieces range from small notebook sketches, to drawings created on unconventional materials, to large scale paintings and photographs.

The collection explores Palestinian life and community over years of oppression. It features an extensive timeline, spanning from 1948 to 2026. This covers major historical events in Palestine as well as important moments in the lives of Eltiqa members and the Eltiqa gallery in Gaza. The timeline is illustrated with a mixture of archival images and anecdotes that showcase various oral histories.

As the genocide unfolds before our eyes, and Gaza and its people are being systematically destroyed, this exhibition tells the story of a community that has managed to overcome years of oppression.

The artworks on view arrived at this exhibition from different places and times. Some works were hand-carried out of Gaza with members of the collective who were able to leave during different phases of the genocide, some in late 2023, and others in late 2025.

‘Psalms of Sorrow’ wins Grand Prix at Tehran Short Film Festival

TEHRAN- Iranian filmmaker Yousef Kargar's "Psalms of Sorrow" won the Grand Prix of the 43rd Tehran International Short Film Festival, receiving the Golden Leaf and a \$3,000 cash prize at the closing ceremony in Tehran on Thursday.

The ceremony was held at Milad Tower on October 22, with the festival's awards presented in the presence of filmmakers, cinema officials and media representatives. The event was attended by Raed Faridzadeh, head of the Cinema Organization of Iran, and festival director Behrouz Shoeibi, and several other cultural officials and artists.

In the international competition, Danish filmmaker Mikkel Bjørn Kehlert won Best Fiction Film for "Måske i marts" ("Maybe in March").

Kiana Naghshineh received the award for Best Animation for "Im Auto Tapes und Butterbrot," representing Germany, while Chilean filmmaker Niels Atallah won Best Experimental Film for "Merrim-undi." Iranian filmmaker Seifollah Samadian received an honorable mention in documentary section for "That Day and Night, the Same Day."

Afghan filmmaker Elham Ehasas won the Best AI Film award for "Forgotten Spaceman," while Hooman Mahmoudi received the Emerging Horizons Special Award for his Iranian film "Bi Dar Koja." Russian filmmaker Alexandra Sokolovskaya received an honorary diploma for Best Fiction Film in the international competition for "The Sun Fell and Rolled Away."

The international category winners received Golden Leaves

Iranian filmmaker Yousef Kargar holds the Grand Prix award at the closing ceremony of the 43rd Tehran International Short Film Festival at Milad Tower in Tehran on October 22, 2026. His film "Psalms of Sorrow" won the festival's top prize.

and cash prizes, with \$1,000 awarded in the main categories and \$500 for the Emerging Horizons special award.

In a video message screened at the ceremony, Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi praised short cinema for bringing together diverse narratives, styles and genres. Referring to this year's festival slogan, "Iranian Thought; Global Narration," he said Iranian short films had taken significant steps toward communicating local experiences to international audiences, despite the difficulties facing the country.

In the national fiction competition, Marjan Ashrafizadeh won Best Director for "Goreh," which

also received the Golden Leaf for Best Film in the Iranian Cinema section. The audience award went to "Adam," which received a Golden Plaque and 400 million rials.

Other major national awards included Best Screenplay for Sima Rasouli and Abolfazl Azizi for "Injury," and the jury's special award for Panah Alvani's "Japanese." Ali Baqeri won Best Actor for "Ghasameh," while Narges Hezareh received an honorary diploma for her performance in "Bi Dar Koja."

In the animation category, Malek Egbali won the Golden Leaf for "Like a Friend, Like a Deer." Habib Alvani received the award for Best Documentary for

"Ehtezar," while Mohammad Sina Heidarizadeh won the Golden Leaf in the adapted-film category for "A Cat in the Snow." Milad Shahjani was recognized for documentary research for "The Song of the Sword Behind Glass Trenches."

The 43rd edition of the festival ran from October 17 to 22, bringing together Iranian and international filmmakers in fiction, documentary, experimental and animation competitions. The event is among the region's established short-film platforms and provides a venue for emerging filmmakers to present their work to audiences and industry professionals.

“Land of Angels” to compete in 14th Asian Film Festival Barcelona

TEHRAN – Babak Khajepasha's "Land of Angels" has been selected for the official section of the 14th Asian Film Festival Barcelona (AFFBCN), which is underway in Barcelona, Spain.

The film tells the story of the suffering of children in Gaza and portrays the human consequences of war through the experiences of a woman who struggles to survive while protecting a group of innocent children from the horrors of conflict, ILNA reported.

Amid the bombings and military offensive in Palestine, the story follows the painful and courageous journey of a woman trapped on the front line. As everything collapses around her, the protagonist takes on the dangerous task of surviving the war while trying to protect, feed, and guide a vulnerable group of innocent children, keeping them safe from the horrors of armed conflict. Through her perspective, the feature film becomes a deeply human portrait of the instinct to protect, the loss of childhood innocence, and civilian resilience under extreme conditions.

The film features Arab actors and centers on the lives, dreams, and struggles of children against the backdrop of the war in Palestine. Rather than presenting the conflict solely through political or military events, the film approaches it from the perspective of civilians, particularly children whose lives have been profoundly affected by the violence.

The production was filmed in Tehran over a period of one and a half years. The film's

international screenings began with its participation in the Kazan festival, following its successful national festival run in Iran.

"Land of Angels" received the Grand Prix for Best Feature Film at the 22nd Altyn Minbar Kazan International Film Festival.

Prior to its appearance in Kazan, "Land of Angels" was the most decorated film at Iran's 44th Fajr International Film Festival, where it received five Crystal Simorgh awards and eight honorary diplomas.

Among its Fajr honors, Khajepasha received the jury's special prize for directing, while Syrian actress Sulaf Fawakherji was honored for her performance. The film also received awards for set design, visual effects, and other categories.

Babak Khajepasha is a director and screenwriter. Following a solid career in television, he achieved immediate international critical recognition with his debut feature film, "In the Arms of the Tree" (2023), a drama on family fractures that was officially selected to represent Iran at the Academy Awards.

With "The Land of Angels" (2026), Khajepasha takes on the roles of screenwriter and director to deliver a humanitarian drama focused on civilian victims of contemporary conflicts in the Middle East. It has also been officially selected as Iran's submission to the 99th Academy Awards in the best international feature film category.

The Asian Film Festival Barcelona is organized by Casa Asia. True to its commitment

Ardabil religious groups condemn Azerbaijan’s school hijab restrictions

TEHRAN – Religious groups, ritual eulogists and religious poets in Ardabil have condemned restrictions on Islamic hijab for female students in Azerbaijan, expressing solidarity with Muslim families and calling for the protection of girls' right to education.

In a statement issued on October 20, the groups, collectively known as the Dar al-Irshad Ardabil Hosseini community, criticized the Azerbaijani government's reported restrictions on headscarves in girls' schools and called on officials in Iran, religious scholars and legal institutions to help secure the removal of the re-

strictions, Mehr reported.

The statement argued that students should not have to choose between continuing their education and adhering to their religious beliefs. It described hijab as an established Islamic obligation and an expression of religious identity, saying that religious dress should not be used as a reason to deny Muslim women educational opportunities or participation in social and professional life.

The signatories also criticized Azerbaijan's domestic anti-religious policies and its political, military and security cooperation

with Israel, arguing that these developments raised questions about the government's approach to Islamic values.

Calling for a response to the restrictions, the groups urged Azerbaijan's Muslim population to pursue their demands for religious rights and equal access to education through unity, awareness, courage and peaceful participation.

The statement also appealed to Iranian officials and religious and legal institutions to take a clear position and pursue measures to protect the rights of Muslim schoolgirls in the neighboring

country.

In a gesture of support, the signatories said schools in Ardabil were ready to receive Muslim girls from Azerbaijan who wear hijab and wish to continue their education there.

"Education should not come at the price of abandoning religious beliefs," the statement said, adding that genuine freedom requires respect for people's convictions.

The statement was signed by religious eulogists and poets, religious congregations and the Dar al-Irshad Ardabil Hosseini community.