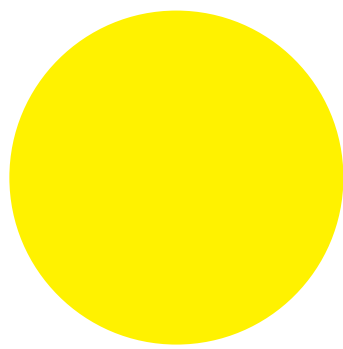


President calls for coordinated Muslim response to Gaza war

8 >



Araghchi warns E3 of backing anti-Iran IAEA draft resolution

2 >

Leader urges Muslim unity, end to aid for Israel in Hajj message

8 >



Muslims pray around the Kaaba, Islam's holiest shrine, at the Grand Mosque complex in the holy city of Mecca on June 6, 2025 during the annual Hajj pilgrimage.
AFP

Seymareh's rich architectural heritage

7 >



'Picasso in Tehran' draws over 120,000 visitors in Tehran

8 >



Tehran rejects 'unfounded' US allegations at UN meeting

2 >



Envoy: Russia's five-billion-dollar investment in Iran finalized

3 >



World Cup Asian qualifiers: Iran coach Qalenoee blames 'frustrating' refereeing in Qatar defeat

6 >

Unraveling death of Caspian seals

From illegal hunting to disease outbreaks

ANALYSIS Once numbering over a million, the Caspian seal, the only marine mammal of the world's largest inland sea, is now facing a slow and silent collapse. From poaching and invasive species to pollution and disease, a web of threats is driving this ancient species closer to extinction. With just 70,000 seals left, Iran and its Caspian neighbors are under pressure to act. 22 years since the Tehran Convention, Iran Daily investigates what is behind the rising number of seal deaths and whether conservation efforts can still turn the tide for one of the region's most iconic species. On page 4, you will find more.

[See page 4](#) >



Leader: US 'cannot have a say' on uranium enrichment

Tehran preparing new counter-proposal to US offer: *Advisor*

International Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that uranium enrichment is the key to the country's peaceful nuclear program, and that the United States "cannot have a say" on the issue. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks at the mausoleum of the founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini in Tehran, where people had gathered to mark the 36th anniversary of the passing of Imam Khomeini. Since April 12, Iran and the US have held five rounds of nuclear talks mediated by Oman to resolve a decades-old dispute over Iran's nuclear program. Both sides have described the talks as "positive and constructive." However, in recent weeks, the two countries have clashed over the issue of uranium enrichment in Iran, which Washington says must be brought to zero. Tehran maintains its nuclear program is exclusively for civilian purposes and views its enrichment industry as a red line. Ayatollah Khamenei rejected the US proposals for Tehran to ultimately stop all enrichment in the country. "If we have 100 nuclear power plants

but don't have enrichment, they will be of no use to us," because "nuclear power plants need fuel" to operate, he said. "The first word of the US is that Iran should not have a nuclear industry and should rely on the United States," the Leader said. "Our response to the US' nonsense is clear: they cannot do a damn thing in this matter," he added. "The proposal presented by the Americans is 100 percent against" notions of independence and self-reliance, the Leader said, adding that, "Independence means not waiting for the green light from America and the likes of America." On Saturday, Iran said it had received "elements" of the US proposal through Omani mediators, the details of which have not been publicly disclosed.

Preparing counter-proposal

Ali Shamkhani, a political advisor to the Leader said on Wednesday that Iran is drafting a counter-proposal to the latest US nuclear offer. He added that the US proposal for a nuclear agreement was not well thought out and made no mention whatsoever of lifting the sanctions. Shamkhani criticized the omission

of sanctions relief in the US offer, describing it as a "fundamental" issue for Tehran.

"There is no mention whatsoever of lifting sanctions in the latest American proposal, even though the issue of sanctions is a fundamental matter for Iran," the Leader's aide said. Shamkhani underlined, "Iran will never relinquish its natural rights." He said Iran will not allow the United States to achieve its objectives regarding the elimination of Tehran's peaceful nuclear program and reduction of the level of uranium enrichment to zero.

Limited uranium enrichment

US media reports said Tuesday the US administration is proposing an arrangement that would permit "limited low-level uranium enrichment on Iranian soil for a to-be-determined period of time." "Under the proposal, the United States would facilitate the building of nuclear power reactors for Iran and negotiate the construction of enrichment facilities managed by a consortium of regional countries," The New York Times wrote. "Once Iran began receiving any benefits from those promises,



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses a ceremony marking 36th anniversary of the passing of the founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini in Tehran on June 4, 2025.
● khamenei.ir

it would have to stop all enrichment in the country." Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin has told US President Donald Trump that he was ready to use Russia's close partnership with Iran to help with negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, the Kremlin said on Thursday. Trump said after a phone call with Putin on Wednesday that time was run-

ning out for Iran to make a decision on its nuclear program. "We have close partner relations with Tehran and, naturally, President Putin said that we are ready to use this level of partnership with Tehran in order to facilitate and contribute to the negotiations that are taking place to resolve the issue of the Iranian nuclear dossier," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Thursday.

Araghchi warns E3 of backing anti-Iran IAEA draft resolution

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Friday warned European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal against supporting a draft resolution at the UN nuclear agency next week that accuses Tehran of non-compliance, calling it a "strategic mistake." "After years of good cooperation with the (International Atomic Energy Agency) IAEA—resulting in a resolution which shut down malign claims of a 'possible military dimension' (PMD) to Iran's peaceful nuclear program—my country is once again accused of 'non-compliance,'" Araghchi said on X. "Instead of engaging in good faith, the E3 (Britain, France, Germany) is opting for malign action against Iran at the IAEA Board of Governors," he added. "Mark my words as Europe ponders another major strategic mistake: Iran will react strongly against any violation of its rights." Araghchi said the false accusations that Iran is violating the Safeguards Agreement – on the basis of shoddy and politicized reports – are clearly designed to produce a crisis. The three European countries reportedly plan to submit the draft resolution to the IAEA Board of Governors at its next meeting on June 9, creating a window to trigger the snapback of all the UN sanctions on Tehran before the mechanism expires in October. The resolution would accuse Iran of failing to



Abbas Araghchi

meet its nuclear obligations and carries the threat of referral to the UN Security Council if Tehran "does not show goodwill," sources said. Iran has repeatedly warned that invoking the so-called snapback by three European members of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will be reciprocated by a firm and proportionate response. The so-called snapback mechanism allows for the return of anti-Iran sanctions suspended under the deal. In late April, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said that France, along with Germany and Britain, "will not hesitate for a single second to reapply all the sanctions" scrapped a decade ago if European security is threatened by Iran's nuclear activities. The IAEA resolution follows a quarterly report from the IAEA last week which cited a "general lack of cooperation" from Iran and raised concerns over undeclared nuclear material. Tehran rejected the report as politically motivated and based on "forged documents" it said had been provided by the Israeli regime.

Tehran rejects 'unfounded' US allegations at UN meeting

International Desk

Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, strongly rejected as "unfounded" the US accusations that Iran is "fomenting instability" in the region. In a letter to the UN chief and the president of the Security Council on Thursday, Iravani said US' allegations during a meeting of the UN Security Council "were entirely unfounded, devoid of credibility, or legal foundation." Addressing a UN Security Council meeting on Gaza on Wednesday, the US ambassador to the UN Dorothy Shea accused Iran of fomenting instability by supporting Palestinian resistance groups including Hamas. During the meeting, the United States on Wednesday vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for an "immediate, unconditional and permanent" cease-fire in Gaza. The US was the only nation to oppose the resolution. Fourteen others, including the United Kingdom, voted in favor. There were no abstentions. Iravani stressed that Washington's anti-Iran allegations were aimed at shielding the Israeli regime from accountability for its ongoing violations of international law in Gaza.

"At a time when the Security Council must act with unity and urgency to end the unparalleled suffering of the Palestinian people, enduring relentless bombardment, forced displacement, famine, and the systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure, it is regrettable and shameful that the United States has once again chosen to obstruct the Council from fulfilling its mandate and to divert attention through politically motivated accusations against others," he wrote. "This calculated deflection serves a single, cynical purpose: to shield the occupying and illegitimate Israeli regime from accountability for its ongoing and egregious violations of international law," the Iranian diplomat said. "Even more egregiously, the United States' veto of the draft resolution, proposed by the Council's elected members and intended to establish an immediate, permanent, and unconditional cease-fire, as well as to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access, represents a blatant dereliction and abuse of the responsibilities entrusted to the Security Council under the UN Charter," Iravani stated. "This is not an isolated incident, but rather a continuation of a deeply troubling pattern we have



Dorothy Shea

witnessed throughout the past 19 months of Israel's genocidal war against the people of Gaza," he noted. "By once again shielding the occupying regime from accountability, the United States has actively enabled the continuation of a catastrophic military campaign that has already killed tens of thousands of civilians, most of them women and children, and driven Gaza to the edge of absolute collapse," he continued. Iravani emphasized that Iran's principled position in support of the Palestinian people and their legitimate resistance against occupation is fully grounded in the UN Charter, international law, and relevant UN resolutions. Iravani said blaming others for the consequences of Israel's unlawful and brutal campaign is nothing but a willful distortion designed to absolve the Israeli regime of its crimes.

Israel's new strikes on Lebanon draw condemnations

International Desk

A series of Israeli strikes targeted Beirut's southern suburbs on Thursday, almost an hour after the Israeli army issued a forced evacuation order to residents in areas that it claims held underground facilities used by the Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah for drone production. The attack was the fourth time Israel has bombed Beirut since a cease-fire with Hezbollah went into effect in November. It has carried out assassinations and announced strikes that it said targeted Hezbollah sites.

Israel has violated the cease-fire on a near-daily basis for seven months, according to the Lebanese government led by President Joseph Aoun, Arab nations and rights groups. Aoun has recently appealed to the United States and France to rein Israel in. Aoun, in a statement on Thursday after the strikes, voiced "firm condemnation of the Israeli aggression" and "flagrant violation of an international accord ... on the eve of a sacred religious festival." The Wafa news agency reported that 100 housing units were destroyed in Israel's strikes on southern Beirut.

Later Thursday night, Israeli strikes also targeted the southern Lebanese village of Ain Qana, according to Lebanese state media, shortly after further Israeli army evacuation warnings were issued for the area. Israel warned Friday that it would keep striking Lebanon until Hezbollah has been disarmed. Iran also on Friday condemned the Israeli strikes. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei described the Thursday evening strikes "as a blatant act of aggression against Lebanon's territorial integrity and sovereignty."

Under the cease-fire, overseen by a monitoring committee whose members include the United States, France and United Nations peacekeepers, Lebanon should disarm Hezbollah. The conflict between Hezbollah and Israel began on Oct. 8, 2023 when the Lebanese resistance group began launching rockets across the border in support of Palestinians in Gaza. Israel responded with airstrikes and shelling and the two were quickly locked in a low-level conflict that continued for nearly a year before escalating into full-scale war in September 2024. It killed more than 4,000 people in



Lebanon, including hundreds of civilians, while the Lebanese government said in April that Israeli strikes had killed another 190 people and wounded 485 wounded since the cease-fire.

Envoy: Russia's five-billion-dollar investment in Iran finalized

Economy Desk

The Iranian ambassador to Moscow announced on Thursday that Russia had finalized a \$5 billion segment of its planned \$8 billion investment in Iran's oil sector, with the remaining contracts progressing towards completion.

"Based on the agreement between the two countries, Russia is set to invest eight billion dollars in Iran's oil projects. To date, nearly five billion dollars of this amount has been finalized, and the remaining contracts are progressing toward finalization," Kazem Jalali was quoted as saying by IRNA.

In a meeting with a group of prominent Russian Iranologists, Jalali elaborated on Russia's investments in Iran's energy and oil sector, emphasizing, "In 2024, Russia was the largest foreign investor in Iran."

Referring to the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty between Iran and Russia and the entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, the Iranian envoy stated, "The relations between the two countries have now been elevat-

ed to the level of strategic relations, and there are high-level exchanges between the officials of the two countries."

Significant opportunities

He added that, "The entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, the continuation of negotiations on the project for transferring Russian gas through Iran, the acquisition of 50,000 hectares of land for the construction of the Rasht-Ashtara railway to complete the North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and its transfer to Russia for the purpose of commencing geological studies, are among the significant opportunities before the two countries." Jalali cited the development of monetary and banking relations between the two countries as another example of the enhancement of bilateral ties, stressing, "The MIR and Shetab networks have been interconnected, providing the possibility for bank transfers and payments for small-scale trade, Iranian students in Russia, and tourists. This project will be further developed in the future."

SCO bank 'important step' towards ditching dollar

Also, in an interview with IRNA, Jalali, referring to Iran's proposal regarding the establishment of a joint bank for the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at the meeting of the Central Bank Governors of the member states in Beijing, described this initiative as "an important step towards de-dollarization and the realization of a multipolar order."

The ambassador described the participation of SCO member states in the process of de-dollarizing the global economy and the use of national currencies or currencies other than the dollar in trade exchanges as effective in this regard.

Jalali also considered the effort to expand trade with SCO member states through the creation of a common market as another step towards the common interests of the members.

The Iranian diplomat further described the development of trade with SCO members within the framework of bilateral or multilateral consultations as important, and regarded the



formation of digital connectivity between national economies as an effective step in this area. The ambassador of Iran to Russia further described the cooperation of SCO members in developing transport and transit infrastructure as im-

portant, stating, "Appropriate investment in this sector can pave the way for the full realization of the member states' capacities within this cooperation framework."

In another part of the interview, Jalali, referring to the

20th anniversary of Iran's presence in the SCO since 2005 as an observer and its full membership since July 2023, emphasized "the important position of the SCO in Iran's regional cooperation within its surrounding sphere."

BRICS development bank backs Iran's accession bid

Economy Desk

Head of the BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB) Dilma Rousseff announced her support for Iran's accession to the multilateral financial institution during a meeting with Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Mohammadreza Farzin.

In a Friday meeting in Shanghai, Farzin and Rousseff discussed increasing monetary and banking interactions with BRICS member countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), IRNA reported. The meeting took place following the meeting of Central Bank governors and economy ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Beijing, China.

The two sides underscored the role of the BRICS New Development Bank in advancing the goals of developing and emerging economies.

Emphasizing the approval by SCO member states for the establishment of the Shanghai Development Bank, they also pointed to Iran's role and membership in international and regional institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank Group, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

During the meeting Farzin also said, "The Islamic Re-



public of Iran, in addition to its presence on the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund, chairs one of the groups comprising 8 countries within that institution." The CBI head, highlighting Iran's favorable economic performance in recent years, referred to Iran's geographical, natural, and human capacities as well as its favorable relations and cooperation with the founding countries of the NDB (India, South Africa, Russia, Brazil, and China).

Farzin expressed Iran's readiness to further strengthen and enhance monetary and banking relations and interactions

with BRICS member countries through the framework of the New Development Bank.

Rousseff also emphasized Iran's economic influence in the region and welcomed the presence of a country with a strong economy in the bank.

"Iran's positive economic indicators and the favorable advantages it possesses will certainly be effective in advancing the objectives of the BRICS New Development Bank," she said.

Farzin invited Rousseff to attend the Asian Clearing Union summit, which will be held in Tehran in the coming months.

Iran's petchem sector invests \$5b to collect flare gas: Official

Economy Desk

An official from the National Iranian Petrochemical Company (NIPC) announced a \$5 billion investment by petrochemical companies to collect flare gases in the upstream sector as well as the development of a strategic document for flare gas reduction management.

The Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) head of the company, emphasizing the petrochemical industry's role in capturing flare gases despite its minor 8-9% share in oil industry flaring pollution (due to maintaining unit safety conditions), stated, "The petrochemical industry has invested approximately \$5 billion to collect upstream flare gases for supplying petrochemical feedstock."

Elaborating on the multi-year flare extinguishment program, Davoud Emadi added that 59 flares in the East Karun region in the northwest

of Iran will be collected following the completion of the flare gas collection project by Bid Boland Persian Gulf Gas Refining, of which 9 flares have been extinguished so far.

Emadi also said necessary groundwork for petrochemical industry investment in collecting flares of the South Pars Gas Complex Company in Asalouyeh, aimed at supplying petrochemical industry feedstock, is underway.

Full-capacity output as solution to flare reduction

The HSE manager of the NIPC, stressing that part of flaring in petrochemical units results from not operating at full capacity, stated, "If production occurs at maximum capacity, the amount of flaring in these units will be minimized."

Emadi, noting that the strategic document for flare reduction management in the petrochemical industry is being



developed and finalized to minimize flaring in the industry, said, "As a leading industry in complying with emission regulations, this sector has 15 active projects for flaring control and gas recovery aligned with this document on its agenda."

Highlighting the industry's commitments to flare gas collection and environmental protection, he emphasized, "With the completion of the East Karun flare gas collection project by Persian Gulf Bid Boland Gas Refining Company, nearly all commitments of the petrochemical industry in carbon reduction will be fulfilled."

Electric utility says solar power employed in over 1,200 gov't offices

Economy Desk

An official with Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (Tavanir) announced that more than 1,200 government offices have been equipped with solar energy, stating, "The renewable capacity in these offices will reach 1,645 megawatts."

"To date, 1,239 offices have been equipped with solar energy, reaching a capacity of approximately 26 megawatts," said Reza Kafeeli, the head of Tavanir's Engineering and Grid Operation, adding that the capacity must reach 1,645 megawatts by the end of the project's implementation.

Referring to measures taken to control electricity consumption in offices, Kafeeli remarked, "We have approximately 100,000 administrative and public service buildings nationwide, all of which are equipped with smart

devices enabling remote monitoring of their consumption load."

According to a resolution issued last year, he added, administrative units must reduce their consumption load during working hours (6:00 AM to 1:00 PM) by 30 percent compared to the previous year. After working hours, their consumption must also decrease by 60 percent compared to working hours.

Government offices have been required to source at least 20% of their electricity from renewable energy, with President Masoud Pezeshkian having issued a two-month compliance period for government agencies to install solar panels, effective June 21.

Referring to this mandatory, the Tavanir official added, "This plan is being implemented rigorously."

Additionally, Mohammad Allahdad,



deputy for transmission and foreign trade at Tavanir, announced the commencement of installing solar power plants on the spare land surrounding electrical substations.

Allahdad further said that Tavanir and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization of Iran (SATBA) had reached a resolution, stipulating that, "Renewable power plants will be constructed on the spare land surrounding electrical substations."

The official said the project is initially being funded by government resources, adding that, "In the future, it can be carried out under contracts with the private sector."

Unraveling death of Caspian seals

From illegal hunting to disease outbreaks



IRNA

ANALYSIS

Among the living creatures of the Caspian Sea, the Caspian seal stands out as the only mammal and one of the most familiar inhabitants of this inland sea. However, these days, it is facing severe challenges, with the deaths of several seals along the northern coastal provinces of Iran raising alarm bells among environmentalists. The threat of extinction looms larger than ever for this marine species.

The vast expanse of the Caspian Sea boasts a unique biodiversity, but this breathtaking ecosystem is grappling with numerous threats — from declining aquatic populations and rising biological pollution to the perilous status of the Caspian seal population. Currently, only about 70,000 individuals of this sole marine mammal remain in the northern sea, marked as an endangered species.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Caspian seal is classified as vulnerable and in dire need of protection. Yet, this responsibility cannot fall on Iran alone; Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan must also chip in to preserve this species.

Challenges facing Caspian seals

Experts point out that violations of the Caspian Sea's coastal boundaries, land-use changes and construction activities, commercial ship traffic, and military exercises in the northern Caspian are all taking a toll on the seals. The breaking up of ice sheets, which can cause seal pups to become separated from their mothers or fall into the water, alongside illegal hunting and the spread of an invasive comb jelly species, have all been called out as deadly threats to this marine mammal.

Because Caspian seals carry about 12% body fat, they have historically been attractive targets for hunting, especially in Russia, where their skin and meat are valued. Fortunately, thanks to the efforts of seal conservation advocates, all Caspian littoral countries and Russia have since banned hunting this precious mammal. Nevertheless, many seals still end up caught and suffocated in fishermen's nets as some fishermen believe they have landed a valuable commodity for trade and therefore kill them.

The trade in Caspian seal pelts has caused some to continue hunting despite bans. Although global warming and the melting of

northern Caspian ice have wiped out much of the seals' habitat on their own, environmental pollution, declining populations of Kilka fish, and diseases transmitted by canids cannot be written off as contributing factors to seal mortality.

Another significant and destructive factor is the proliferation of an invasive comb jelly species called Mnemiopsis, which entered the Caspian Sea via the Volga River and has become a major threat to the region's ecosystem. These invaders feed on plankton and small fish eggs, rapidly multiplying and throwing a wrench into the food chain. Since plankton is the main food source for Kilka fish — and both Caspian seals and sturgeon feed on Kilka — the disruption of this food web could ultimately drive the Caspian seals to the brink of extinction.

Amid various hypotheses including avian influenza, military operations, and viral and bacterial diseases as causes of seal deaths, the most plausible explanation appears to be military exercises, which are common among Caspian coastal states.

Canine distemper virus

The canine distemper virus is a highly contagious pathogen af-

fecting canids. It is believed that seals contract this virus through contact with infected canids such as jackals while resting on land. Symptoms, predominantly seen in older seals, include eye discharge, weight loss, miscarriage, inability to dive, and lack of response to humans. Fortunately, this virus poses no threat to humans.

Until 2000, the main threats to Caspian seals were ranked as hunting, overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution, and disease. Today, with available data, entanglement in fishing nets appears to carry more weight than other factors. It is also predicted that with the expansion of oil industries and ongoing global warming, these impacts will ramp up, collectively speeding up the decline of this valuable species.

Conservation efforts, milestones

The year 2010 marked the official launch of the Caspian Seal Conservation Center on the Caspian coast, thanks to the dedication of Dutch philanthropist and nature lover Lenie't Hart, along with researchers and experts like Amir Sayyad Shirazi and Mostafa Shahi Ferdous. Over the past eight years, the center has rolled out effective programs aimed at preserving

and saving the only marine mammal of the Caspian Sea. Noteworthy achievements include rescuing 89 seals along Iran's shores and holding conferences with officials from the Commonwealth of Independent (CIS) states.

Iran proudly stepped up as the first among Caspian littoral states to establish this center on Ashuradeh Island in Mazandaran, one of the few relatively pristine and untouched islands in the region. The center's primary goals include rescuing injured seals, raising environmental awareness, educating fishermen, and branching out conservation activities to neighboring Caspian countries.

Population trends, protection plans

A 2008 census estimated the Caspian seal population at around 100,000, but unfortunately, that number has since dropped off to approximately 70,000.

In response to the sharp decline, a project titled "Ecology and Pollution Study of the Caspian Sea" was launched in 2000 with support from the Caspian Environment Program, spanning all five bordering countries. Since 2006, this initiative has evolved into the "Caspian Seal Conservation Project," backed by the

“

Currently, only about 70,000 individuals of this sole marine mammal remain in the northern sea, marked as an endangered species. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Caspian seal is classified as vulnerable and in dire need of protection. Yet, this responsibility cannot fall on Iran alone; Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan must also chip in to preserve this species.



RU-RTR RUSSIAN TELEVISION

Journalists and employees of Russia's Interdistrict Environmental Prosecutor's Office walk near the bodies of dead seals on the shore of the Caspian Sea, Dagestan, on December 4, 2022.

Darwin Institute and the University of Leeds, aiming to assess the species' status and reduce threats. The late Hormoz Asadi represented Iran in this project and made significant contributions to Caspian seal conservation. Key activities undergoing to preserve the Caspian Seal include:

- Patrolling Caspian coasts to locate dead seals, determine causes of death, and collect samples for a data bank.
- Conducting aerial surveys on ice to estimate populations of breeding seals and pups.
- Attaching radio telemetry devices to seals to study their habits and identify feeding and resting areas.
- Assessing the impact of ice-breaker ships on seal habitats to figure out ways to mitigate damage.
- Mapping seal distribution and identifying critical habitats.
- Educating fishing communities and raising public awareness as integral parts of the conservation process.
- Organizing regional and international meetings to swap notes among the five countries and international experts.
- Promoting the Caspian seal as a key species for the Caspian habitat at the regional level.
- Evaluating the effects of various threats on the Caspian seal population.

Together, these efforts are aimed at turning the tide for this endangered species and preserving the unique biodiversity of the Caspian Sea. The Head of Wildlife Supervision at Mazandaran Province's Environmental Protection Office has come forward with news that 30 Caspian seal carcasses have been discovered along the province's coastline this year. The remains were found in the coastal areas of Juybar, Babolsar, Miankaleh, Tonekabon, and Chalus, with the highest number of fatalities being reported in the central regions of Juybar and Babolsar. Korous Rabi'ei pointed out that Caspian seal deaths have historically peaked during late spring and summer, coinciding with their migration to Iran's coastal waters. Based on data collected over the

past three years, these mortalities may drag on until November. "Last year, dozens of seal carcasses were found washed up along Mazandaran's shores," he said. He further explained that Caspian seals migrate to the northern parts of the Caspian Sea in late autumn for breeding, where the water is shallower and ice-covered. With the arrival of spring and summer, they head back to Iran's coastal waters. Recently, two more seal carcasses were discovered intact in Juybar; Tissue sampling has been conducted, and official laboratory results are awaited. The head of Wildlife Supervision laid out several possible causes for these deaths, including the dropping water levels of the Caspian Sea, climate change, and potential disease outbreaks, all of which require thorough investigation. The Caspian seal, the only mammal native to the Caspian Sea and an endangered species, was once estimated to number around one million individuals two decades ago. However, according to some sources, over 900,000 seals have been wiped out due to various violations.

Caspian Sea home to 850 animal species

Spanning 436,000 square kilometers with 7,000 kilometers of coastline, the Caspian Sea is home to an extraordinary variety of flora and fauna, reportedly including over 500 plant species and 850 animal species. One of the sea's major draws is its diverse fish population, consisting of 78 species from 17 families. Among these, sturgeon, salmon, whitefish, pike-perch, carp, Killka, trout, mullet, and kutum are well-known worldwide. Iran's shores are recognized as a critical habitat and origin for this commercially valuable fishery. Yet, amid this stunning expanse — the world's largest inland body of water — the Caspian seal (also known as the "water dog") stands out as the only marine mammal. Once boasting a population exceeding one million, the seal's numbers have now plummeted to rough-

ly 70,000 due to various factors. Each year, many seals either get caught up in fishermen's nets or perish due to the proliferation of an invasive comb jelly species called Mnemiopsis.

The Caspian seal is the smallest true seal species — earless and found exclusively in this sea. It inhabits most parts of the Caspian, with seasonal shifts depending on food availability. During summer and autumn, most Caspian seals stick around Iran's waters.

Mammal with two-million-year legacy

The Caspian seal's origins trace back to ringed seals that migrated from the Arctic about two million years ago during the Quaternary period. When ice sheets between continents melted, these ringed seal populations broke off, forming isolated groups — one of which became the Caspian seal. Another isolated population is the Baikal seal, whose skull bears a strong resemblance to that of the Caspian seal. Seals are marine creatures commonly believed to live along sea shores. In Iran during the 1980s, some Mazandaran residents recalled spotting seals, locally called "water dogs," in quiet docks such as Neka Pier. The Caspian seal is the only native mammal of the Caspian Sea and holds immense genetic and ecological value in maintaining the sea's food chain balance. As a top predator widely distributed across its habitat, the seal is considered an indicator species

for the Caspian Sea. Its presence signals the health of the marine environment, which many local communities depend on for their livelihood. Generally, Caspian seals are tied to water temperature; When temperatures rise, they move down to colder, deeper waters. The Caspian Sea's varying water temperatures across different regions have thus created a valuable habitat for these seals.

Physical characteristics, behavior

The Caspian seal has a spindle-shaped body, large eyes, small ears, and thick, long whiskers numbering about 134. When fully grown, it reaches about 1.5 meters in length and weighs up to 80 kilograms, making it one of the smallest seal species with 10 pairs of upper jaw teeth and 8 pairs in the lower jaw. Each flipper has five fingers with long nails, connected by webbing that acts like fins, enhancing their swimming skills. Its legs are aligned with the tail, and its body is covered with short fur that is soft and white at birth, turning grayish with age and season, shedding entirely in winter. The dark spots on its back become more numerous and darker with age, while the body color lightens. Since its legs cannot bend forward, the seal must wriggle and roll to move on land. Being earless, the Caspian seal communicates through vibrations in the water detected by its whiskers. It has poor eyesight and smell, is colorblind except

for green, and primarily feeds on small fish like Killka and sometimes crustaceans. Its diet varies seasonally, with adults consuming up to three kilograms of fish daily — around one ton annually. Due to their diet, harmful chemicals such as heavy metals build up in their bodies. In late autumn, Caspian seals make their way to northern areas with frozen, shallow waters to breed. They create two types of holes in the floating ice for breathing, exiting, and sheltering newborn pups. Mothers protect their pups for about five weeks and mate again one month after giving birth. These mammals are monogamous, and females undergo an 11-month pregnancy, delivering pups weighing about five kilograms. After the breeding season, seals return to southern parts of the sea. Females reach maturity between five and seven years old, while males mature between six and seven years. Caspian seals can dive up to 50 meters and stay underwater for about one minute. Since they lack gills, they must surface for air regularly. However, dives reaching 150 meters and longer durations have been recorded. During winter, summer, and mating seasons, seals gather in large groups but otherwise lead solitary lives.

Conservation status, int'l efforts

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Caspian seal is an endangered species. Coastal countries, along with local communities and authorities, must put together priority programs to ensure the species' survival in the salty waters of the Caspian. In 2003, the Tehran Convention on Caspian biodiversity conservation was signed by the five littoral states. Following this, Iran and Russia, recognizing the importance of the sea's species, rolled out postage stamps featuring the Caspian seal and sturgeon.

A specialist tends to a captured Caspian seal.
● IRNA

Each year, many seals either get caught up in fishermen's nets or perish due to the proliferation of an invasive comb jelly species called Mnemiopsis. The Caspian seal is the smallest true seal species — earless and found exclusively in this sea. As a top predator widely distributed across its habitat, the seal is considered an indicator species for the Caspian Sea. Its presence signals the health of the marine environment, which many local communities depend on for their livelihood.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Urgent need to step up breeding of Great Bustard

Safeguard Iran's biodiversity

PERSPECTIVE

The deputy of Natural Environment and Biodiversity at Iran's Department of Environment, during a visit to the Great Bustard breeding site at the Sootav and Hamamian Wildlife Refuge in West Azerbaijan, shed light on the development of operational plans aimed at protecting and reviving this valuable species over various timeframes.

He stated, "With the cooperation of national, provincial, and local agencies, we must draw up and roll out clear scientific and executive programs to restore the Great Bustard population in this region." During the visit, attention was drawn to promising developments at the site in recent months. Notably, the successful breeding of three Great Bustard chicks in captivity — an unprecedented

achievement in the country — marks a major step forward in efforts to conserve and boost the numbers of this critically endangered species. This success was brought about by the dedicated specialist team on site, in close collaboration with Shahid Beheshti University, which, in a commendable move, has taken on part of the ex-situ breeding process. Deputy Zohrabi described this as a

successful experience and a model that could catch on in other parts of the country. He expressed hope that, in the future, by creating the right conditions, subsequent generations of this species could also be released into their natural habitat. The Great Bustard is considered one of the world's unique and highly significant animal species. In recent years, due to shrink-

ing natural habitats, excessive hunting, and disturbances in its breeding and nesting grounds, it has been pushed to the brink of extinction. As a result, it is now listed on the Red List of Threatened Species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Environmental experts say this species plays a key role in keeping up genetic and ecosystem diversi-

ty. A decline or loss of such species could throw a wrench into natural cycles and chip away at biodiversity. Iran's Department of Environment is striving to put in place initiatives such as the National Great Bustard Action Plan to help shore up the population of this vital species.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRIB news agency.



● TASNIM



Children of the Kuchek-e Sofla village, in Saqqez County, Kurdistan Province, Iran, participate in an initiative to raise awareness about the status of the Great Bustard, which is native to the area and on the brink of extinction. They put their colored hands on the wall of a park to resemble the shape of the bird in question.
● hamshahrionline.ir

World Cup Asian qualifiers:

Iran coach Qalenoei blames 'frustrating' refereeing in Qatar defeat

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoei said his team was left "frustrated and annoyed" by several decisions made by Saudi referee Mohammed Al Hoish in a 1-0 away defeat against Qatar at the 2026 World Cup Asian qualifiers on Thursday.

Qatari defender Pedro Correia found the net in the 41st minute, five minutes after the visitors had gone down to 10 men due a second booking inside three minutes for left-back Milad Mohammadi.

Despite a first defeat in their qualification campaign, Qalenoei's men, who had already secured a spot in next year's finals in North America, remained top of Group A with 20 points, while the Qataris confirmed their progress to the fourth round of the qualifiers.

Questioning the Asian Football Confederation's decision not to pick a referee from Fareast Asia for the game, Qalenoei said: "We had a decent start to the game but there were some refereeing decisions, especially the second yellow card for our player, which caused us to lose confidence at the end of the first half, though we improved in the second half."

The Iranian coach believed the Saudi official had double standards in his approach to the game.

"He officiated in a way that annoyed and frustrated our team. He kept calling fouls against us and issuing cards, while ignoring similar challenges from Qatari players, letting them



Iranian winger Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi is tackled by a Qatari player during a World Cup Asian qualification game in Doha, Qatar, on June 5, 2024.

● **FPRI**

get away with it without any punishment," said the Iranian, whose team had been last beaten in February 2024 – a 3-2 loss to the same opponent in the AFC Asian Cup semifinals. With some of the key players, namely prolific striker Sardar Azmoun and skipper Alireza Jahanbakhsh, missing the game with injury, Qalenoei fielded a new-look starting XI on Thursday, including Amirhossein

Hosseinzadeh and Ali Alipour – the top two leading marksmen in the newly-finished Iranian top-flight season – as well as Sepahan winger Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi, who made his senior international debut, and Tractor center-back Aref Aqassi.

"The Iranian league ended early, and some players were out of action for 20 days. Seven of our main players were injured but the young

players still impressed today and I am very optimistic about the future," added Qalenoei. Iran will finish the qualifiers against bottom-side North Korea at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Tuesday.

Double debutants

Uzbekistan and Jordan celebrated a maiden World Cup qualification, while regular qualifier South Korea also booked a place in the finals

with a 2-0 win over Iraq in Basra.

Uzbekistan claimed the spot at the expanded 48-team showpiece following a goalless stalemate against the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi, which guaranteed Timur Kapadze's side a top two finish in Group A of the preliminaries alongside Iran. Foolad Khuzestan goalkeeper Utkir Yusupov made a string of second-half saves to earn his nation a first World

Cup qualification since Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Elsewhere, Kim Jin-gyu and Oh Hyeon-gyu were on target in the second half for the South Koreans against 10-man Iraq and that win not only secured qualification for Hong Myung-bo's side from Group B but confirmed Jordan would also progress.

The Asian Cup finalists had

beaten Oman 3-0 earlier in the evening through a hat-trick from Ali Olwan, but the Jordanians had to wait for the outcome of Iraq's game before being able to celebrate their World Cup berth. Australia also stands on the cusp of a place at the finals after Aziz Behich scored the only goal in a 1-0 win over Japan in Perth in Group C. Victory keeps Australia three points clear of Saudi Arabia, which won 2-0 against Bahrain in Riffa, with one game to play.

Goals from Musab Al-Juwayr and Abdulrahman Al-Obud earned Saudi Arabia a win that put Australia's celebrations on hold until the two nations meet in Jeddah on Tuesday. The Socceroos' vastly superior goal difference means they can lose that meeting with the Saudis by up to four goals and still advance to a sixth consecutive World Cup finals as second-placed finishers behind the Japanese. Indonesia continued its impressive campaign with a 1-0 win over China to guarantee progress to the fourth round, while ending the qualification hopes of Branko Ivankovic's side.

Goals from Tamer Seyam and Wessam Abou Ali kept Palestine's chances of going through to the next round intact, with a 2-0 win over hosts Kuwait moving Ihab Abujazar's side to within one point of Oman in fourth place in Group B.

Iranian rowers win double golds in Grand Moscow Regatta Cup

Sports Desk

Iranian rowers walked away with a couple of gold medals at the 64th Grand Moscow Regatta Cup on Thursday.

Mahna Hajhosseini and Saqi Maleki teamed up to win the gold medal in the women's double sculls event on the first day of action on the Moscow Rowing Canal, thanks to a fastest time of 7:51.94 minutes in the final. Meanwhile, Amirreza Abdali and Amirhossein Mahmoudpour claimed the men's gold medal in the same category, crossing the finish line in 7:02.09 minutes.



Iran's Azarpira to make long-awaited return in Sassari

Sports Desk

Iranian freestyle wrestler Amirali Azarpira will make his long-awaited return to action at the Memorial Matteo Pellicone event – starting today in the Italian city of Sassari.

A two-time world under-23 gold medalist, Azarpira had been sidelined with a torn ligament injury following an impressive 97kg bronze-winning campaign in at the Paris Olympics last summer, only recovering from a knee surgery to resume training in mid-May.

Azarpira was joined by Ehsan Amini – a member of the Iranian freestyle coaching staff – in the visit to the Mediterranean Island of Sardinia.

The 23-year-old wrestler is eager to secure a spot in the Iranian 10-man squad for September's World Championships in Zagreb.

Standing between Azarpira and a Zagreb ticket is fellow-Iranian Ahmad Bazri, who

won the International Takhti Cup gold in Isfahan May, before walking away with the ultimate prize at the Ulaanbaatar Open – the third UWW Ranking Series event of the international season – last week, thanks to an emphatic 8-0 victory over the host's Gankhuyag Ganbaatar in the final showpiece.

The 97kg slot is one of the three weight classes – along

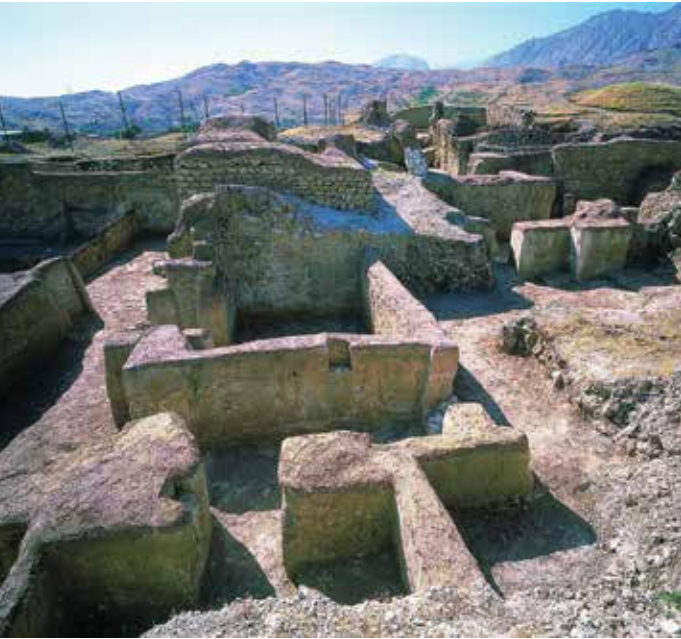
with the 70kg and 79kg categories – yet to be decided in the Iranian freestyle team for the world event.

Ali Mo'meni (57kg), Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan (61kg), Rahman Amouzad (65kg), Younes Emami (74kg), Kamran Qassempour (86kg), Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg), and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) have punched their Zagreb tickets.



● **IJWFR**

Seymareh’s rich architectural heritage



● [gardeshgari.blog](#)

Iranica Desk

The historic city of Seymareh (Darreh Shahr), with a history spanning thousands of years, is the largest and most renowned archaeological site in Ilam Province. In recent years, through expert planning and scientific excavations, a new chapter of its historical identity has been unveiled. Jamal Sheikhi, an archaeologist, wrote in a note, “The historic city of Seymareh is located alongside the modern city of Darreh Shahr. The area of this ancient city was previously estimated at 120 hectares, but through exploratory programs carried out, nearly 22 hectares have been added to this area, bringing it to a total of 142 hectares.” This ancient city is one of the earliest sites registered on Iran’s National Heritage List of the country. Based on field studies and existing written sources, its origin dates back to the late

Sassanid period and early Islamic centuries. However, new findings suggest older evidence, at least from the Parthian era, chtn.ir wrote. A dossier for the registration of this city in the List of Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been prepared, and a proposed plan for the global registration of the Seymareh landscape and Kabirkuh, centered on the historic city of Seymareh, has been submitted to the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Ministry. The historic city of Darreh Shahr is managed by the Seymareh National Research Base, and preservation and organizational programs for its existing artifacts are carried out annually. Many travelers, geographers, and historians in the early Islamic centuries wrote about the historic city of Seymareh in their



books and writings. Additionally, figures such as Sir Henry Rawlinson (1839), Jacques de Morgan (1891), and the Holmes Archaeological Team (1934–1938) conducted studies on this historic city. To date, 11 archaeological excavation seasons have been conducted in the ancient city of Seymareh. The findings include promi-

nent structures such as a bazaar, streets, a lord’s residence, a caravanserai, and a mosque. Within the boundaries of the historic city, there are also the Chartaqi (an architectural unit consisting of four barrel vaults and a dome) of Sorkhabad and Jahangirabad Castle. Valuable discoveries such as exquisite plasterwork and pottery vessels have also

been retrieved. The Seymareh Mosque is built on a hill in the center of the historic city. This structure has a rectangular shape measuring approximately 40×22 meters. It shares similarities in materials and construction methods with contemporary structures, but the use of decorative gates and extensive plasterwork makes

it the most prominent building in this historic city. The diverse plaster decorations on the walls, arches, and niches of the mosque are among the most significant archaeological findings in this area. These stuccoes are not only artistically outstanding but can also serve as reliable evidence for dating the mosque’s construction, thus helping to determine the period of its building and the lifespan of the historic city of Seymareh. This structure is located in the northwest of the city and features a courtyard-centered design. Its materials include stone and lime mortar, and the ceilings are covered with saddle-shaped arches. Situated south of the city and adjacent to the bridge, this building features large reception rooms, water supply systems, and waste disposal facilities, indicating a public function, likely serving as a rest house.

Three main passages have been identified in different directions, with widths varying between 3.5 and four meters. These routes include water channels, stone paving, and, in most cases, roofs. Additionally, an advanced drainage system, including clay pipes and stone-lined channels, has been found within this city, demonstrating the high level of civilization of its inhabitants. Considering its rich architecture, extensive history, and documented evidence, the historic city of Seymareh presents a valuable opportunity for UNESCO registration. The proposed plan for the global registration of the Seymareh landscape and Kabirkuh is currently in preparation. With the cooperation of relevant agencies, it is hoped that this historic site will soon showcase Iran’s cultural and historical contributions on the global stage.

Enjoy heights, heritage of Abbasabad Complex in Hamedan

There is a notable tourist attraction in Abbasabad, Hamedan, which is considered a destination in itself. Located on a hill in southern Hamedan, the Abbasabad Tourist Complex is also known by several other names, including Abbasabad Pool, Abbasabad Hill, Naghareh Khaneh Hill, Akhar-e Asphalt, and Baam-e Hamedan (Roof of Hamedan). Historically, this hill was a site of significant

announcements, such as changes in rule, conveyed to the public via drums called Naghareh, which earned it the name Naghareh Khaneh Hill. The Abbasabad Tourist Complex was opened in 2015. The route leading to the hill and the site is exceptionally scenic, passing through charming alley-gardens that enhance its appeal, visitiran.ir wrote.

One of the most captivating features along this route is the artificial waterfall situated to the east of the complex, standing 60 meters tall and creating a mesmerizing landscape. Stairs encircle the waterfall, adding to its attractiveness — climbing these stairs offers a panoramic view of the city beneath. The resort is an ideal spot for entertainment, especially for visitors who enjoy overlooking Hamed-

an from a height. From one side, it offers a view of Hamedan, while on the other, you can see the lush Abbasabad gardens, Mishan Plain, and Alvand Mountain, providing breathtaking scenery. Facilities at the tourist attraction include an open-air cinema, a skate sport park, a restaurant, a mosque, and a parking area. Adjacent to the pool, visitors will find a store, café, and electric

entertainment devices. Additionally, there are ten two-bedroom duplex villas nearby, available for tourists seeking accommodation. Most visitors prefer traveling to this site during summer evenings, when the sunset paints a spectacular view from the city’s roof. In winter, the place offers a unique experience of walking on ice. As a result, the complex functions year-round, pre-

senting different aspects in each season. However, visitors should be mindful of the mountainous climate, which can pose challenges during winter. Nearby, you can visit the Ganjnameh Resort, which includes attractions such as the Ganjnameh Telecabin, an aquarium, and the famous Ganjnameh Waterfall with its ancient inscriptions. Mishan Valley and Alvand Mountain are also close

natural attractions well worth exploring. Two other essential sites are the Tomb of Baba Taher and the Tomb of Avicenna—must-visits to deepen your understanding of Iran’s cultural and literary heritage. To reach Abbasabad from anywhere, you need to travel to Hamedan. From there, two main roads lead to the site: one starting at Eram Garden and the other from Ganjnameh Road.



● [visitiran.ir](#)

Leader urges Muslim unity, end to aid for Israel in Hajj message

Social Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Muslim countries must cut off all aid to the Zionist regime and prevent it from committing further savage acts against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. In his annual Hajj message published on Thursday, the Leader called on millions of Muslim pilgrims from around the globe, who are in Mecca to perform their rituals, to demand that their governments fulfill their duty vis-à-vis the unfolding catastrophes in Gaza and the West Asia. “Muslim governments must block all avenues of assistance to the Zionist regime and restrain their criminal hands from continuing these barbaric actions in Gaza,” the Leader said. Ayatollah Khamenei warned that the

criminal occupying regime has taken the tragedy in Gaza to an “unbelievable level” with horrifying cruelty and unparalleled savagery. “Palestinian children are now being killed not only by bombs, bullets, and missiles, but also by thirst and starvation. The number of families grieving for their loved ones, their youth, their fathers, and their mothers is increasing day by day.” The Leader added. The Leader emphasized that the United States is a “definite accomplice” in the Zionist regime’s crimes, urging America’s allies in the region and other Muslim nations to heed the call of the Holy Qur’an on defending the oppressed and to compel the US to end its oppressive behavior. Ayatollah Khamenei hailed the “miraculous” resistance of the people of Gaza, which has put the Palestinian issue

right at the top of the concerns of the Muslim world and all freedom-loving people around the world. The Leader stressed the importance of seizing the opportunity to rush to the help of the oppressed people of Gaza. Ayatollah Khamenei also urged “public speakers and people of social standing” to raise people’s awareness regarding the Palestinian issue. The Leader said, “despite the efforts of the arrogant powers and the supporters of the Zionist regime to erase the name and any memory of Palestine, the evil nature of the leaders of that regime and their foolish policies have created a situation in which Palestine’s name shines more brightly today than ever before and public hate of the Zionists and their supporters is also more severe than ever. This is an important opportunity for the Islamic world.”



Muslims pray around the Kaaba, Islam's holiest shrine, at the Grand Mosque complex in the holy city of Mecca on June 6, 2025 during the annual Hajj pilgrimage.
● AFP

Pezeshkian congratulates Eid al-Adha to Muslim leaders

President calls for coordinated Muslim response to Gaza war



Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian held Eid al-Adha phone conversations with leaders of several Muslim countries, offering greetings and urging greater Islamic unity, strategic cooperation, and collective support for the Palestinian people amid ongoing regional challenges. In a phone call with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Pezeshkian thanked the kingdom for hosting Iranian pilgrims and praised the Hajj as “a

magnificent symbol of Muslim unity,” president.ir reported. During his conversation with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, he urged Muslim nations to become “examples of brotherhood and constructive interactions.” In his call with Tunisian President Kais Saied, Pezeshkian urged “a unified voice” among Muslim countries in condemning the Zionist regime’s attacks on Gaza and called for an immediate end to the bloodshed there. Speaking to Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedow, Pezeshkian described Eid al-Adha as a “symbol of unity, brotherhood, and spiritual bonds,” and praised Ashgabat’s recent peace seminar as a sign of Turkmenistan’s commitment to regional harmony. In his exchange with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Pezeshkian emphasized the “shared responsibility” of Muslim countries to support Gaza and

strengthen ties across the Islamic world. In a call with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, Pezeshkian said unity in the Islamic world could create “a collective will to halt” Israeli atrocities in Gaza. He called Eid al-Adha “a symbol of unity” and urged Muslim nations to act together to restore peace. During a conversation with Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, the President expressed hope that the “blessings” of the holiday would strengthen Islamic countries’ ties, calling for “enhanced unity” among Muslim nations. In a call with Oman’s Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Pezeshkian welcomed the recent bilateral talks in Muscat and said the agreements reached “should be implemented swiftly” to serve both nations’ interests in politics, economy, and science. Speaking with Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Pezeshkian called for

“joint efforts” to pressure Israel into ending violence in Gaza, saying only “political and wise solutions” could lead to stability. In his conversation with Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Pezeshkian described strengthening ties within the Muslim world as both a “religious and strategic duty,” and expressed hope that the holiday would inspire “solidarity and peace” across the Islamic Ummah. In a phone call with Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Pezeshkian emphasized the need for Islamic nations to raise a unified voice in support of Gaza, denounce Israeli atrocities, and strengthen solidarity, bilateral ties, and strategic cooperation across the Islamic world. With Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Pezeshkian emphasized that Iran sees Kazakhstan and all Muslim nations as “brothers,” saying he hoped Eid

would deepen “brotherly ties” and foster peace and security in the Islamic world. In his conversation with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, Pezeshkian praised the “shared cultural and historical roots” between the two nations and highlighted the importance of implementing recent agreements to advance “mutual interests and strategic cooperation.” During the call with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Pezeshkian described his April visit to Baku as “a turning point” in bilateral relations and underscored the importance of swiftly implementing agreements in energy and transport for economic growth. Speaking with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Pezeshkian expressed hope that the spiritual values of Eid would bring Muslim nations closer and help end “Zionist crimes” in Gaza. He reaffirmed Iran’s readiness to strengthen ties with Islamic countries, “especially Turkey.”

‘Picasso in Tehran’ draws over 120,000 visitors in Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

The ‘Picasso in Tehran’ at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, which opened on March 11, marked the first time the museum presented all of its Picasso-related works from its own collection, according to head of the museum Reza Dabirinejad. A total of 67 works were shown. Few knew the museum held this many Picasso pieces, and the reveal sparked widespread attention both in Iran and internationally. The scale of the collection, paintings, sculptures, artist’s books, prints, and other pieces, reaffirmed the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art’s standing among the world’s top modern art institutions. The long gap since the last public viewing of the collection—and the generational shift—made this exhibition particularly compelling for younger audiences who had rarely had the chance to experience these works. With a growing awareness of global art, these visitors came eager to engage directly with masterpieces. For them, the museum offered a rare and powerful encounter. This was one reason for the unprecedented turnout:

Over 120,000 people visited the exhibition during its two-and-a-half-month run. The crowd wasn’t limited to younger generations; artists, scholars, and art enthusiasts of all ages also turned out in impressive numbers. Seventeen countries sent diplomats to the opening and to various points throughout the exhibition—an opportunity to showcase Iran’s cultural and museological capacities. Several embassies even organized special tours for their diplomats and staff. Global media picked up the story, and the event laid the groundwork for potential future inter-museum collaborations. The exhibition also featured educational programming: A series of Cinémathèque events screening Picasso-related films, and five expert panels that offered critical analysis and discussion. These efforts turned the exhibit into more than just a visual experience; it became a platform for content creation, dialogue, and knowledge sharing. The exhibit was designed with a strong curatorial narrative. Each gallery focused on a specific theme: One on Picasso’s early life, one on Cubism, one on war-era works like ‘Guernica’ and ‘The Weeping

Woman’, and others on single-piece interpretations with explanatory texts to deepen viewer understanding. To offer historical context, select works by Picasso’s contemporaries—global modernist masters—were also shown. The final gallery gave the exhibition a local dimension, featuring Iranian artists influenced by Picasso, drawing a cultural link between the works and their audience in Tehran. Multimedia elements, including specially produced films and motion graphics, enriched the storytelling. These helped bring a contemporary sensibility to the museum experience. Visitors engaged with the exhibition on multiple levels—reading, watching, observing. Many waited in long lines to absorb the narratives, sat in the museum to watch films, or explored the exhibit’s layered content at their own pace. There was even an interactive section where visitors could rearrange elements of Picasso’s works to create personalized versions and take them home—a space for creativity and connection. Among the many side programs were special children’s tours, featuring interactive games and



art-making inspired by Picasso’s work. These brought hundreds of kids and teens into the museum, allowing them to turn play into memorable artistic moments. Evening events, art therapy workshops, and other activities aimed to make the museum a space for varied, inclusive experiences—bridging art with contemporary issues and diverse visitor needs. Just as ‘Guernica’ addressed the trauma of its own era, the exhibition explored how art can soothe, connect, and speak to the complexities of our time.