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'big lie': Nuclear chief

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International Desk

Iran's nuclear chief has dismissed as "a big lie" the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s recent report on the country's nuclear program, stressing that presenting "false" reports will only tarnish the credibility of the agency. A recent report by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi on Iran's nuclear program claimed that Tehran had failed to report its nuclear activities at three undeclared locations and raised concerns about the country's stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60 percent purity. "The claim that the Islamic Republic of Iran has not fulfilled its commitments under the Safeguards Agreement is a big lie," Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said on Wednesday. "There is no evidence in this regard. There is not a single report from the IAEA inspectors that indicates Iran's opposition or obstruction in carrying out their duties," Eslami said. The Iranian nuclear chief further censured the provocative move by the United States and European trio of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany (E3) to draft a resolution against Iran at the IAEA Board of Governors, warning that if a confrontational approach is adopted, the Islamic Republic will also

take countermeasures.

He further emphasized that during 2023 and 2024, more than 427 inspections of Iranian facilities were conducted, which is "unprecedented" in the history of nuclear activities worldwide. The Iranian official also noted that the IAEA's cameras are installed at all the country's nuclear facilities, stressing that no activity is carried out without the agency's supervision and inspection.

E3 in blatant violation of Resolution 2231, JCPOA: Najafi

Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna, stressed that since the three European states are in blatant violation of Resolution 2231 and the JCPOA, they are neither legally nor morally entitled to trigger the JCPOA and Resolution 2231 dispute resolution mechanism. Responding to the threat of snapback by the E3, Reza Najafi laid out Iran's stance on Wednesday during the IAEA Board of Governors meeting regarding the agency's report on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231. As Najafi noted, by imposing sanctions and restrictive measures against Iran, the European troika are severely un-



Reza Najafi (front) and Chief State Inspector for Nuclear Radiation Safety of Ukraine Oleh Korikov get ready for the IAEA's Board of Governors meeting at the agency's quarters in Vienna, Austria, on June 9, 2025. ● AFP

dermining the JCPOA and UNSC Resolution 2231. He specifically termed their decision to refrain from implementing the sanction relief commitments specified in the JCPOA on the transition day in October 2023 as an illegal act and a clear example of their significant non-compliance. Najafi also pointed out that the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a committed NPT member and based on the longstanding fatwa (religious decree) issued by the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution, "will not pursue nuclear weapons." In its statement issued later at the meeting, the EU urged Iran "to resume the provisional implementation and bring into force the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement, to assist the Agency to provide credible assurances on the absence of undeclared nuclear activities". The Iranian envoy once again stressed that Iran's nuclear activities, including enrichment and stockpiling at various



levels, are "entirely peaceful and in line with its legitimate rights under the NPT, and are subject to IAEA safeguards and verification." Najafi, while expressing serious concerns about the content of the IAEA director general's recent report, stressed that the issues raised in the report did not happen in a vacuum and should not

be interpreted separately from the root causes surrounding the current situation regarding UNSC Resolution 2231 and the JCPOA. "I wish to emphasize that Iran believes a diplomatic deal is achievable if Iran's legitimate rights, including domestic enrichment, are respected and recognized."

Araghchi: US deal 'within reach' if sanctions lifted, enrichment allowed

US mission outlines trust-building measures



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) holds a meeting with his Omani counterpart, Badr Al-Busaidi, on the sidelines of the 22nd Oslo World Forum on June 11, 2025. ● ISNA

spite the two sides' expression of satisfaction with the process of the talks as the administration of US President Donald Trump has been throwing a spanner in the works via its excessive demands, including the reduction of Iran's uranium enrichment level to zero, and fueling baseless concerns over Iran pursuing a nuclear weapon. "President Trump entered office saying that Iran should not have nuclear weapons. That is actually in line with our own doctrine and could become the main foundation for a deal," Araghchi said. "As we resume talks on Sunday, it is clear that an agreement that can ensure the continued peaceful nature

International Desk

The Iranian foreign minister underlined that an agreement with the United States is "within reach" once the Islamic Republic's right to uranium enrichment is ensured and unilateral sanctions against the country are terminated.

Abbas Araghchi made the statement in a post on his X account on Wednesday, as Iran and the United States are scheduled to hold the 6th round of their indirect talks on Tehran's peaceful nuclear program in the Omani capital of Muscat on Sunday, June 15. The negotiations have oftentimes gone through slings and arrows de-

of Iran's nuclear program is within reach — and could be achieved rapidly." The Iranian foreign minister, however, underlined, "That mutually beneficial outcome relies on the continuation of Iran's enrichment program, under the full supervision of the IAEA, and the effective termination of sanctions." Meanwhile, the US Mission Vienna's chargé d'Affaires also outlined a path to agreement in Iran-US talks. "Iran now has a clear opportunity to build confidence: by providing the Agency with greater transparency, not less; by implementing the Additional Protocol, not limiting inspections; by ending its production of highly enriched uranium, not accelerating it; by accepting the designation of Agency inspectors, not undermining the Agency's verification," Howard Solomon said. However, in another instance of

mixed signals coming from the Trump administration, the US president himself expressed doubt that Iran will agree to halt uranium enrichment as part of a nuclear deal with the US. In an interview on the "Pod Force One" podcast, released on Wednesday, the US president admitted his confidence was waning when asked if he believed he could convince Iran to shut down its nuclear program. "I don't know," he said, "I did think so, and I'm getting more and more — less confident about it." Since April 12, Iran and the United States have held five rounds of indirect talks, mediated by Oman, on a replacement for the 2015 nuclear deal, which was derailed by the American withdrawal in 2018. Over the past decade, Iran has on numerous occasions proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program, as evidenced in more than a dozen reports by the IAEA.

Iran vows to strike entire US bases in region if attacked

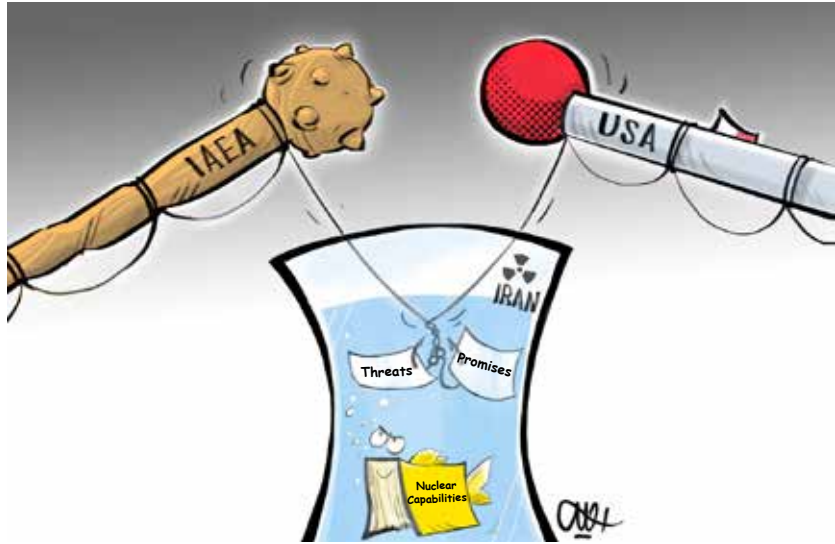
International Desk

Iran's Defense Minister General Aziz Nasirzadeh warned that all US military bases in the West Asian region would be targeted if Washington initiates hostilities against Iran. Issued during a press briefing following a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the blunt warning specifically referenced US installations in Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE — where the Pentagon maintains about 45,000 troops across dozens of bases. The minister emphasized Iran's growing military capabilities, citing last week's successful test of a ballistic missile carrying a two-ton warhead. The top US general overseeing American forces in West Asia said on Tuesday there were a range of options when asked if the military was prepared to respond with force if talks with Iran fail. "I have provided the secretary of defense and the president with a wide range of options," US Army General Michael "Erik" Kurilla, the head of US Central Command (CENTCOM), told a congressional hearing.



"Every so often it is said that if negotiations fail, it will lead to a conflict. On behalf of the Iranian nation, I declare that in case a conflict is imposed upon us, we will strike our designated targets, the enemy will suffer disproportionate losses, and America must leave the region," Nasirzadeh said. The minister also stressed that Iran's defense capabilities are non-negotiable.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Minister nixes Iran’s slumping oil sales claims, cites countermeasures

Economy Desk

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad dismissed on Wednesday western reports of declining oil sales by the country, stressing, "This claim is unfounded."

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday in response to a question about whether sanctions would affect Iran's oil sales, Paknejad said, "Naturally, sanctions have been imposed to restrict oil sales, but we've devised specific strategies to counter them accordingly. This is why these sanctions haven't significantly impacted Iran's crude oil sales in recent years." The minister did not disclose specific quantitative metrics and fiscal valuation details of crude oil exports.

The fuel sector has been a main target of foreign sanctions on Iran's oil industry. The country has steadily increased its refining capacity in recent years to prevent the sanctions from affecting its transportation and

electricity generation sectors. Bloomberg claimed in a report on June 4 that Iran's crude oil shipments to China fell sharply in May as tighter US sanctions and seasonal refinery maintenance weighed on flows, citing preliminary ship-tracking data and market analysts.

As data from Vortexa Ltd. purported, Iran exported just over 1.1 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude and condensate to China last month, marking a drop of roughly 20% compared to the same period a year earlier.

In response to a question about differences in the approach of Donald Trump's second presidential term compared to his first one, Paknejad stated, "Both in the period prior to this and now, slogans about restricting Iran's oil sales have always been raised. However, we believe we can overcome these restrictions. Experience has also shown that these pressures have not had a decisive impact on the continuation of Iran's oil exports." He also said that the Oil Minis-

try will spare no effort to convert crude oil into higher value-added products in refineries. "In the construction of refineries, petro-refineries, and mini-refineries, or assisting in their establishment, the ministry utilizes all available legal capacities. Undoubtedly, if we can convert crude oil into higher value-added products in refineries, we will have more favorable conditions for exports."

Regarding whether Iran still views oil as a revenue source or has moved towards development, he noted, "We regard oil as a national asset, but at the same time, we are striving to properly define the concept of 'resource preservation'."

"Some believe resource preservation means leaving oil underground for future generations. However, the reality is that according to international estimates, the world may gradually move towards reducing the role of fossil fuels in energy supply," the oil minister added.

He continued, "Of course, this



● RAHEB HOMAVANDI/REUTERS

view also has opponents, and many believe that as long as fossil fuels exist, they will continue to play the primary role in ener-

gy supply. Therefore, the more we can extract crude oil under favorable economic conditions, observing efficiency and eco-

nomical scales, and convert it into productive assets above ground, the more we will have invested in the country's future."

Atabak: Iran reaches preferential tariff agreement with Oman, Pakistan



Economy Desk

Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak announced on Wednesday that Iran reached agreements with Oman and Pakistan for the export of goods with preferential tariffs. Referring to exports with preferential tariffs to Eurasian Economic Union member states, Atabak said, "The ultimate goal of the government is to facilitate exports and imports freely and without direct government intervention, provided that the Central Bank [of Iran (CBI)] exercises full supervision over the process to ensure the accuracy and integrity of transactions," as reported by IRNA.

Preferential tariffs refer to mutually agreed-upon reduced import duty rates

applied to specific goods traded between Iran and partner countries under formal trade agreements.

At the unveiling ceremony for the foreign currency pre-sale tools and export privilege exchange halls, the minister underscored the importance of supervising and controlling foreign currency and preventing its illegal outflow, adding, "The Central Bank's expertise lies in simplifying processes and preventing illegal and alternative channels."

He pointed to the launch of the export privilege exchange, describing it as an important and operational step, and added that in Wednesday's cabinet meeting, "export incentives were also approved, which will be implemented soon."

Highlighting the reduction of financing costs and currency pre-sales, he noted, "These measures can play an effective role in supplying foreign currency and strengthening domestic production."

Emphasizing the importance of facilitating and accelerating processes, the minister said, "The Central Bank must effectively facilitate the supply of foreign currency for exporters and importers, and the simplification of foreign currency supply must be placed on the Central Bank's agenda."

CBI seeking new methods to secure foreign exchange resources

Economy Desk

The governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) announced on Wednesday that the bank is pursuing new methods to secure the country's foreign currency resources.

At the unveiling ceremony for the foreign currency pre-sale tools and export privilege exchange halls in Tehran, Mohammadreza Farzin said the country's foreign exchange revenues have declined over the past two to three months due to falling oil prices, stressing, "We are seeking new methods to secure the country's foreign currency resources," as reported by IRNA.

"The Central Bank is pursuing risk reduction and creating stability in the country's exchange rate," Farzin added.

Referring to encountering two current issues requiring new instruments, he continued, "The first issue relates to currency pre-sale, which is almost similar to a forward market – a contractual agreement to buy or sell an asset like currency at a predetermined future price – but has some limitations; this plan has been designed to meet the currency needs of en-

terprises."

"This new instrument has been developed to reduce the problems of managing the country's foreign currency and create exchange rate stability," Farzin added.

According to the CBI head, "Several measures have been taken this year in the field of foreign currency financing. One of these measures is the launch of a new instrument through which \$2 billion worth of securities have been issued, \$460 million of which have been sold so far. The goal is for the entire amount to be realized by year-end (March 20, 2026)."

Regarding the currency pre-sale market, he said, "This instrument allows enterprises to pre-sell their future foreign currency needs, which can lead to reduced industry risks, decreased exchange rate fluctuations, and increased market confidence."

Farzin identified the second instrument as relating to the secondary market, operating under the title of "export privilege," explaining, "In this market, various industries receive privileges based on economic policies and can compete." According to the official, the stated market helps exporters of ag-



▲ The CBI Governor Mohammadreza Farzin addresses the unveiling ceremony for the foreign currency pre-sale tools and export privilege exchange halls in Tehran on June 11, 2025. ● ISNA

ricultural and industrial products facilitate the repatriation of their export proceeds and creates an incentive to strengthen foreign currency financing and market stability.

"This year, with reduced oil revenues due to falling oil prices, the need for alternative methods to secure foreign currency has been felt. Fortunately, the newly developed instruments have been responsive, and it can be expected that more foreign currency will be provided for the country's development and investment in the future."

Tehran ready for long-term agri cooperation with Kazakhstan, China



Economy Desk

Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri-Ghezleji expressed

Iran's readiness to develop long-term cooperation with Kazakhstan and China in the agricultural sector.

◀ Iranian Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri-Ghezleji (c) attends the Astana International Forum (AIF), in Astana, Kazakhstan, on June 11, 2025. ● maj.ir

Speaking at the Astana International Forum (AIF), Nouri-Ghezleji emphasized Iran's geopolitical position, its neighborhood with countries like Kazakhstan, as well as China's economic capacity, describing the points as foundations for mutually beneficial long-term cooperation, Mehr reported.

"Iran shares this privileged position with its friends and neigh-

bors, facilitating east-west and north-south transit routes for agricultural products from these countries to other parts of the world," the agriculture minister added.

Noting that Iran and Kazakhstan possess special agricultural advantages, he stated that his country "with its fertile lands across various regions, particularly in northern and central areas featuring a four-season climate and unparalleled agricultural diversity produces over 130 million tons of agricultural products annually."

"Agricultural processing and complementary industries in

Iran have also reached advanced development levels, with over 10 million tons of diverse agricultural products exported worldwide each year," he said.

Highlighting deep economic, cultural, and religious ties between Iran and Kazakhstan, Nouri-Ghezleji announced joint efforts with Kazakhstan's Minister of Trade and Integration, Arman Shakaliyev, toward comprehensive development of bilateral economic relations.

Regarding relations with China, the Iranian minister remarked, "Economic stakeholders alongside research, scientific, and

technical organizations in the agricultural sectors of both the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China have established extensive relations."

According to the minister, under the current administration of the Islamic Republic of Iran, "new horizons have opened in this regard, with current bilateral agricultural trade volume with China standing at approximately \$1.5 billion."

He also referenced Iran's strong agricultural trade ties with Pakistan, noting annual bilateral trade with that country hit about \$2 billion.

Takht-Ravanchi: Iran-US talks have not hit dead end

Threatening snapback while supporting talks double-dealing

INTERVIEW

Less than three months have passed since indirect negotiations began between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States, mediated by the Sultanate of Oman. So far, five rounds of talks have taken place in Muscat, Oman, and Rome, Italy. According to Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei, the sixth round is scheduled for Sunday in Muscat. What makes this round particularly tense is Washington's push for "zero enrichment" in Iran, while Tehran insists that this red line is non-negotiable. A day before the timing and location of the sixth round were finalized, IRNA sat down with Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs and a key member of the negotiating team, to get a clearer picture of how the talks are going and what lies ahead. Here's the interview:

IRNA: Have the Iran-US talks reached a deadlock?

TAKHT-RAVANCHI: No, I wouldn't say that at all. I think calling it a deadlock is inaccurate. International negotiations almost always have their ups and downs. Whether we're talking about matters of global peace and security or international trade, any negotiation on the world stage comes with its own sensitivities, and you need patience and perseverance to see it through. So, rushing to judge a process that only kicked off a few months ago doesn't make much sense.

It's perfectly normal to hit tough patches — we've had moments in previous rounds where it really felt like we were getting nowhere. But we pushed through those. Right now, the more we move forward and start putting things in writing, the more likely it is we'll run into twists and turns.

What truly matters to us is safeguarding the country's national interests and sticking to that course. Whether the pace of talks speeds up or slows down isn't a big deal to us — what counts is reaching an outcome that benefits our people. That's our priority, and we believe we'll eventually get there.

Has Iran finalized its response to the US proposal delivered through Oman's foreign minister? When will this response be handed over?

We're still working on it — it hasn't been finalized yet. But we've made good progress, and we think the response we're putting together is reasonable. Hopefully, within the next few days, we'll wrap it up and hand it over to Oman's foreign minister so he can pass it on to the Americans.

Although the foreign minister emphasized that the details of the talks will remain confidential under diplomatic protocols, partial leaks about the US proposal have stirred public curiosity. Can you give us a general idea of what Iran's response will include?

Look, our proposal isn't just a one-liner or a paragraph that can be dismissed with a quick "no." It's got substance — it shows we're serious, and that our position is grounded in clear principles. Our approach is logical, and any proposal worth considering needs to have internal coherence — a solid beginning, middle, and end, without contradictions.

We believe the draft we're preparing — though not finalized — is solid and can serve as a starting point for serious work. If the other side is politically willing, there's definitely room to move forward. In any international negotiation, the initial text is really just the jumping-off point — you go deeper from there. You might hammer out an agreement on one part fairly quickly, while other parts take

Majid Takht-Ravanchi,
Iran's deputy foreign
minister for political affairs
● MOHAMMADREZA
ALIMADADI/IRNA

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We believe the draft we're preparing — though not finalized — is solid and can serve as a starting point for serious work. If the other side is politically willing, there's definitely room to move forward.

International Atomic
Energy Agency (IAEA)
Director General
Rafael Grossi (C) visits
Iran's peaceful nuclear
achievements exhibition
in Tehran, Iran, on April
17, 2025.
● AEOI



Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs
● MOHAMMADREZA ALIMADADI/IRNA

more time.

To be honest, we're not talking about a long, complicated document here. We're not aiming for a full-blown contract or a detailed memorandum that takes ages to draft. What we've come up with is more of a framework — and if we can see eye-to-eye on that, then we can dive into more detailed talks. Our sense is that if there's agreement on this framework, it could pave the way for a deal both sides can live with.

Can we take from what you said that Iran's response will keep the door to diplomacy open?

That's how we see it, yes. Our

approach is to put forward a logical proposal aimed at reaching a solution within our principles. We're also open to hearing what the other side has to say about it.

When you reviewed the US proposal, did you get the sense that Washington also wants to keep the diplomatic window open, or did you start having doubts about their intentions?

I'd rather not get into the details of the negotiations through the media. Once the next round of talks kicks off, we'll share our thoughts on the US proposal — in full detail. We've reviewed their proposal carefully, and we've

worked just as carefully on our response. So, in the sixth round, we'll present our views on both their proposal and ours — explaining why we drafted it the way we did and what logic it's based on. But I'd rather those discussions happen at the negotiating table.

In rounds four and five, the issue of "zero enrichment" suddenly took center stage, whereas the tone of the first three rounds was more positive, and both sides seemed to have reached some mutual understanding of each other's red lines. Did the US delegation, or specifically Steve Witkoff, change their position on enrichment after round three?

Mr. Witkoff actually voiced two different positions. At first, he spoke of 3.67% enrichment, but a few weeks later, in an interview, he contradicted himself and claimed Iran doesn't need enrichment at all. So regardless of what was said in the talks, his public stance has clearly shifted. These kinds of contradictions cast a shadow over the negotiations — when the person you're talking to keeps changing their tune, it naturally takes a toll.

In contrast, our position has remained consistent from day one. We've done our homework and reached clear conclusions on key issues. On the topic of zero enrichment, we've seen the US messaging fluctuate in public. It may have been more muted in the actual talks, but it hasn't been absent. Each time the issue came up,

we firmly reiterated our position: Zero enrichment is a non-starter for us.

So, can we assume that if the US keeps pushing for zero enrichment at the table, the talks will either stall or move very slowly?

The next round is critical. Back in round three, we laid out a written framework of ideas that we believed could serve as a basis for progress. The US didn't give us anything in writing until after round five. Round six will be the first time we formally respond to their written proposal.

If this idea of zero enrichment, which they've brought up publicly, shows up in the negotiations too, our response will be clear and unwavering. It's too early to predict how things will play out, but I can say this: The stance we've made public will be echoed in the talks as well, and we'll lay out our reasoning for why enrichment inside Iran must continue.

Oman and the US have floated the idea of a consortium, and we understand Iran might be open to it — but only if enrichment happens inside the country. Can you elaborate on the potential and the challenges of this proposal? Could it help break the deadlock on enrichment?

There are still a lot of unanswered questions about the consortium idea — who the members would be, what share each one would have, what exactly the consortium would do, and where the activities would take place. Would



each country be responsible for a specific task, or would all work happen jointly? Would some countries just invest and stay out of the day-to-day operations? These are important details that we need clarity on before we can give a definite answer. One thing we're absolutely clear on: Enrichment must take place in Iran. If the consortium were set up in a way that enrichment happens elsewhere, or even if just that part of the process is moved outside Iran, while the rest stays here — that's unacceptable to us. We've said this in the talks and made it clear in public, too. If enrichment within Iran is built into the consortium model, then we can start addressing the other questions. It's not like we're waiting for a yes or no just based on the location of enrichment — we have a lot of concerns that still need answers before we can make a decision. The bottom line is, we haven't reached a conclusion yet on the consortium idea, and we believe we're entitled to get those answers first. But let me be clear: Enrichment inside Iran, even under a consortium, is one of our red lines.

What are Iran's red lines regarding sanctions relief? What are Iran's demands from the American side, and what strategies are being considered to ensure that, this time, the previous scenario with the JCPOA does not play out again?

We have been through this before. We had an experience during the JCPOA era: Under President Obama, the deal was signed, finalized, and implemented. Then, President Trump came along and pulled out of the JCPOA, which was a clear breach of commitment, and the consequences were plain for all to see. Under president Biden, we reached an understanding regarding our assets in Qatar that was never put into practice. So, we have these experiences with two American presidents, and these episodes have taught us a valuable lesson: We must always watch out for any move they might make to wriggle out of their commitments.

Of course, as you pointed out, getting guarantees is no walk in the park, but we have put this on the table from the outset and will keep pushing for it. There are some ideas on how to hammer out a guarantee, but as talks move forward, we will keep everyone posted as necessary.

At this stage, what we can say about sanctions is that we must see real, tangible benefits from their removal. We won't settle for mere promises or statements on paper that certain sanctions have been lifted, only for the other side to wash their hands of the matter. This is a point we have raised in the talks and will continue to underscore: The mere lifting of sanctions is necessary but not enough. Our practical benefit from sanctions relief must be front and center. What they do internally is their own business; We won't get involved in their internal affairs.

What matters to us is that, for example, when it comes to oil sales, if they need to amend congressional laws or issue executive orders to make it happen, that's up to them. Whatever needs to be done on their side is their concern. What counts for us is that we can feel the effects of sanctions relief on the ground, which would give us some peace of mind that the sanctions have not just been lifted on paper but are playing out in

practice and we can bank on this outcome.

Do you think that just lifting the nuclear-related sanctions — even if all our expectations in this area are met — will deliver the economic benefits and opening you have in mind for the country? Or should the sanctions allegedly imposed due to non-nuclear issues also be lifted?

From our perspective, all the sanctions imposed on us are illegal. Our legal position is that every sanction against us is baseless and unlawful. That is our main stance.

Of course, as you mentioned, we are negotiating within the nuclear framework, and naturally, any sanctions directly or indirectly related to the nuclear issue must be lifted. If these are fully removed, and if we see honesty in the implementation of this relief and there is no nitpicking or attempts to shirk their obligations, we believe we can reap the benefits of sanctions relief as I outlined.

An important point is that some sanctions initially imposed under the nuclear issue have, over time, been rebranded or shifted to other categories. These cannot be used as a pretext for further pressure. Directly or indirectly, anything linked to the nuclear file may now be dressed up in a different guise, or during negotiations, they may try to rename sanctions and claim they fall under a new heading. I don't want to prejudge, but I can say that such changes in sanction labels are on our radar, and we will bring them up at the negotiating table when the time is right. When we reach the stage where sanctions relief is a serious topic, these matters will certainly be front and center for us.

In the coming days, it is expected that European countries, together with the US, will table a resolution, and it is likely to pass at the IAEA Board of Governors. Do you feel that alarm bells are ringing for our nuclear case at the Agency and the Board? What has the government done in recent months, both politically and technically, to head off a crisis that might be triggered by the Board of Governors?

We have been in touch with members of the Board of Governors and the Security Council, especially China and Russia, two friendly countries whose positions are closely aligned with ours and who play a key role both as permanent Security Council members and at the IAEA Board. We have also been in talks with European countries, and we have been very clear with them: "The Agency is a technical body and must not be used as a political tool."

We know that in the past, the Agency has been used as a political football, and it may happen again in the future. But we see it as our duty to sound the alarm to those who might try to drag the Agency into a space where it is used to pile pressure on Iran. We have said that if they go down this road, we will not sit on our hands; We will respond. What kind of response we will give depends on the nature and content of the resolution. As you noted, a draft resolution is on the table and may be put to a vote in the coming days. Whether it passes or not is still up in the air, but we have braced ourselves for the worst-case scenario. The content of the resolution is secondary in impor-



— though not irrelevant, as it will shape our response. First and foremost, we will certainly respond.

Are the European Troika looking to trigger the snapback mechanism (automatic reimposition of UN Security Council resolutions)?

Yes, that's exactly the case, and as you know, our stance on the snapback issue is crystal clear. I'd like to point out that countries trying to play politics with the Agency are laying their cards on the table. On the one hand, they claim to support ongoing talks — including those between Iran and the US, where their positions are well known — but on the other, they've kicked off activities against us at the Agency. What does this double-dealing mean? Isn't it obvious they have other motives up their sleeves?

They might have all sorts of intentions; Perhaps they want to turn up the heat on Iran to reach their goals and, for instance, hold back on concessions. Over the past twenty-odd years, they've put us to the test — from the very first talks with the three European countries, then the 5+1, and later the JCPOA negotiations. Throughout these years, we've stood our ground and our positions haven't changed. From day one, we've insisted on enrichment taking place in Iran, stating that unless this is recognized, the talks simply won't get off the ground. That principle still holds. So, if they think they can box Iran into a deal that doesn't really suit them, they're barking up the wrong tree.

What's happening at the Board of Governors and the Agency is just one part of our differences with Europe. You're involved in Iran-Europe talks. Where's the sticking point that's holding up progress? Is it the Ukraine war and the claim about Iran helping Russia, or are there other issues at play?

We've been holding talks with the Europeans for years, and it's always on our agenda. Wherever we are, we spell out clearly that the Agency could be open to abuse. Our positions are communicated to them in no uncertain terms. If snapback comes up or is about to, we make our view plain and lay out our actions.

At the same time, our nuclear issue and peaceful program are so transparent that we have no qualms about discussing them. As you mentioned, the Agency's inspections of Iran are unprecedented. If you get the actual figures and make a comparison, you'll see what kind of inspections have been carried out here — proof of our transparency.

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● DOUG MILLS/
THE NEW YORK TIMES

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● IRNA



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If we're ranking priorities, our neighbors come first. We have 15 neighboring countries — like Russia, the Persian Gulf states, and others — and we're working to build the best possible relations with them. The record of President Pezeshkian's government on neighborly cooperation is strong, and under the late president Raisi, we also had good ties with our neighbors.

Our relations with China are also solid; While not a direct neighbor, it's in our neighborhood, and we have excellent ties. President Pezeshkian will soon visit China. We have ongoing political exchanges, economic agreements, and diverse cultural cooperation, all of which shore up our relationship. That said, it's not just about neighbors. If the basic principles of relations are observed — like non-interference and equal footing — we're open to working with others, including Europeans. But our main focus is on our neighbors, and while talks with the Europeans are ongoing and we're eager to work together in various fields, they're not our top priority at the moment.

Regarding the threats by the Zionist regime about attacking Iran, and the media hype claiming the US has blocked such actions — do you consider any military strike by this regime on Iran's nuclear facilities or any part of Iranian territory as a deal-breaker for indirect talks between Iran and the US? It's often said the Islamic Republic sees any attack on its soil by this regime as coordinated with the US.

First, before getting into this, I should say all this media hype and talk that if nothing happens, the Zionist regime will launch a military strike, is mostly bluster and an attempt to sway the talks. They think this kind of posturing can shake our resolve, but this analysis is off the mark. They know our capabilities — both defensive and offensive — and are well aware that any move on their part won't go unanswered. So, you can be sure they'll think twice before making any move.

As for US-Israeli cooperation, their military ties have always been out in the open — they've admitted as much themselves. Their joint military actions in the region are well documented. So, if any miscalculation happens, it will definitely be with US and Israeli involvement, and our position on this is absolutely clear.

The full article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

each country be responsible for a specific task, or would all work happen jointly? Would some countries just invest and stay out of the day-to-day operations? These are important details that we need clarity on before we can give a definite answer. One thing we're absolutely clear on: Enrichment must take place in Iran. If the consortium were set up in a way that enrichment happens elsewhere, or even if just that part of the process is moved outside Iran, while the rest stays here — that's unacceptable to us. We've said this in the talks and made it clear in public, too. If enrichment within Iran is built into the consortium model, then we can start addressing the other questions. It's not like we're waiting for a yes or no just based on the location of enrichment — we have a lot of concerns that still need answers before we can make a decision. The bottom line is, we haven't reached a conclusion yet on the consortium idea, and we believe we're entitled to get those answers first. But let me be clear: Enrichment inside Iran, even under a consortium, is one of our red lines.

What are Iran's red lines regarding sanctions relief? What are Iran's demands from the American side, and what strategies are being considered to ensure that, this time, the previous scenario with the JCPOA does not play out again?

We have been through this before. We had an experience during the JCPOA era: Under President Obama, the deal was signed, finalized, and implemented. Then, President Trump came along and pulled out of the JCPOA, which was a clear breach of commitment, and the consequences were plain for all to see. Under president Biden, we reached an understanding regarding our assets in Qatar that was never put into practice. So, we have these experiences with two American presidents, and these episodes have taught us a valuable lesson: We must always watch out for any move they might make to wriggle out of their commitments. Of course, as you pointed out, getting guarantees is no walk in the park, but we have put this on the table from the outset and will keep pushing for it. There are some ideas on how to hammer out a guarantee, but as talks move forward, we will keep everyone posted as necessary. At this stage, what we can say about sanctions is that we must see real, tangible benefits from their removal. We won't settle for mere promises or statements on paper that certain sanctions have been lifted, only for the other side to wash their hands of the matter. This is a point we have raised in the talks and will continue to underscore: The mere lifting of sanctions is necessary but not enough. Our practical benefit from sanctions relief must be front and center. What they do internally is their own business; We won't get involved in their internal affairs. What matters to us is that, for example, when it comes to oil sales, if they need to amend congressional laws or issue executive orders to make it happen, that's up to them. Whatever needs to be done on their side is their concern. What counts for us is that we can feel the effects of sanctions relief on the ground, which would give us some peace of mind that the sanctions have not just been lifted on paper but are playing out in

practice and we can bank on this outcome.

Do you think that just lifting the nuclear-related sanctions — even if all our expectations in this area are met — will deliver the economic benefits and opening you have in mind for the country? Or should the sanctions allegedly imposed due to non-nuclear issues also be lifted?

From our perspective, all the sanctions imposed on us are illegal. Our legal position is that every sanction against us is baseless and unlawful. That is our main stance. Of course, as you mentioned, we are negotiating within the nuclear framework, and naturally, any sanctions directly or indirectly related to the nuclear issue must be lifted. If these are fully removed, and if we see honesty in the implementation of this relief and there is no nitpicking or attempts to shirk their obligations, we believe we can reap the benefits of sanctions relief as I outlined. An important point is that some sanctions initially imposed under the nuclear issue have, over time, been rebranded or shifted to other categories. These cannot be used as a pretext for further pressure. Directly or indirectly, anything linked to the nuclear file may now be dressed up in a different guise, or during negotiations, they may try to rename sanctions and claim they fall under a new heading. I don't want to prejudge, but I can say that such changes in sanction labels are on our radar, and we will bring them up at the negotiating table when the time is right. When we reach the stage where sanctions relief is a serious topic, these matters will certainly be front and center for us.

In the coming days, it is expected that European countries, together with the US, will table a resolution, and it is likely to pass at the IAEA Board of Governors. Do you feel that alarm bells are ringing for our nuclear case at the Agency and the Board? What has the government done in recent months, both politically and technically, to head off a crisis that might be triggered by the Board of Governors?

We have been in touch with members of the Board of Governors and the Security Council, especially China and Russia, two friendly countries whose positions are closely aligned with ours and who play a key role both as permanent Security Council members and at the IAEA Board. We have also been in talks with European countries, and we have been very clear with them: "The Agency is a technical body and must not be used as a political tool." We know that in the past, the Agency has been used as a political football, and it may happen again in the future. But we see it as our duty to sound the alarm to those who might try to drag the Agency into a space where it is used to pile pressure on Iran. We have said that if they go down this road, we will not sit on our hands; We will respond. What kind of response we will give depends on the nature and content of the resolution. As you noted, a draft resolution is on the table and may be put to a vote in the coming days. Whether it passes or not is still up in the air, but we have braced ourselves for the worst-case scenario. The content of the resolution is secondary in impor-



tance — though not irrelevant, as it will shape our response. First and foremost, we will certainly respond.

Are the European Troika looking to trigger the snapback mechanism (automatic reimposition of UN Security Council resolutions)?

Yes, that's exactly the case, and as you know, our stance on the snapback issue is crystal clear. I'd like to point out that countries trying to play politics with the Agency are laying their cards on the table. On the one hand, they claim to support ongoing talks — including those between Iran and the US, where their positions are well known — but on the other, they've kicked off activities against us at the Agency. What does this double-dealing mean? Isn't it obvious they have other motives up their sleeves? They might have all sorts of intentions; Perhaps they want to turn up the heat on Iran to reach their goals and, for instance, hold back on concessions. Over the past twenty-odd years, they've put us to the test — from the very first talks with the three European countries, then the 5+1, and later the JCPOA negotiations. Throughout these years, we've stood our ground and our positions haven't changed. From day one, we've insisted on enrichment taking place in Iran, stating that unless this is recognized, the talks simply won't get off the ground. That principle still holds. So, if they think they can box Iran into a deal that doesn't really suit them, they're barking up the wrong tree.

What's happening at the Board of Governors and the Agency is just one part of our differences with Europe. You're involved in Iran-Europe talks. Where's the sticking point that's holding up progress? Is it the Ukraine war and the claim about Iran helping Russia, or are there other issues at play?

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World Cup Asian qualifiers:

Newcomer Mohebbi inspires short-handed Iran to fitting finale



Sports Desk

Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi definitely offered the brightest spark for Iran head coach Amir Qalenoee in the latest international week. Having made an impressive debut for the national team against Qatar last week, the 25-year-old winger produced a man-of-the-match performance on Tuesday to lead a depleted Iranian side to a 3-0 home victory over North Korea in the final outing at the World Cup Asian qualifiers. Mohebbi broke the deadlock for Iran with 15 minutes left on clock, slotting in on the rebound after his initial effort was kept out by visiting keeper Kang Ju-hyok, and then provided Mahdi Taremi with a clipped cross three minutes later before the Inter striker headed home his 55th international goal. Substitute Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh's composed finish in the third minute of stoppage time rounded off the win against North Korea, which went down to 10 men in the 66th minute through a straight

red card for midfielder Tam Kye. The comfortable victory saw Iran, which had secured qualification with two games to spare, finish atop the Group A table with 23 points, with Team Melli's sole defeat coming in the dead-rubber against Qatar (1-0) last Thursday in Doha. "Thank God I made my first international appearances. I'm grateful to Mr. Qalenoee for giving me the opportunity to showcase my skills. The manager told me and other newcomers to play as if it is a league game," said Mohebbi, who bagged nine goals and 10 assists in 37 games across all competitions for Persian Gulf Pro League club Sepahan in the newly-finished campaign. Mohebbi also credited senior players Taremi and Saeid Ezaatollahi for helping him "settle in quickly with the team."



Iranian winger Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi celebrates during a 3-0 victory over North Korea at the World Cup Asian qualifiers at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on June 10, 2025. ● FARSNEWS

AVC Women's Volleyball Nations Cup:

Winning streak snapped as Iran undone by Kazakhstan

Sports Desk

Iran was left heartbroken after failing to complete yet another comeback at the AVC Women's Volleyball Nations Cup, suffering a 3-1 (25-14, 25-18, 22-25, 26-24) defeat against Kazakhstan in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Wednesday. Trailing by two sets, Iranian girls rallied with a much-improved performance in the third set and then stormed to a 7-0 lead in the fourth – appearing poised to force a decider, before Kazakhstan mounted a late comeback to preserve its perfect record in the Vietnamese capital. The defeat ended a three-game winning run for Iran, which had beaten Indonesia and the Philippines in two five-set thrillers either side of a 3-1 win against

the New Zealand earlier in the competition. Opposite-spiker Tatyana Nikitina topped the scoring chart for Kazakhstan with 15 points, followed by middle-blocker Saniya Balagazinova, who contributed with 11. Outside-hitter Masoumeh Qadami, meanwhile, chipped in 15 points for Iran, with Elaheh Poursaleh (13 points) and Sepinoud Dastbarjan (11) also finishing in double figures. "I think the lack of confidence cost us in the first two sets, but once we found the belief, we showed our true quality, and matched Kazakhstan point for point," Dastbarjan said after the game. Later in the day, the Philippines came out victorious in straight sets (25-17, 25-21, 25-18) against

the New Zealand to into second place in the Pool B table behind Kazakhstan. Iranian girls will still have the chance to join Kazakhstan, which will play the Philippines today, in progressing to semifinals with a victory over Mongolia in their final outing in the group phase. "The Kazakhstan team had a height advantage, which made the difference today as our players struggled in the first two sets," Iran head coach Lee Do-hee said after the game. The South Korean still shrugged off the defeat, saying: "We simply weren't well-prepared for this game. I'll tell my players that the match against Mongolia is even more crucial, so I don't consider today's defeat a major setback."



Majidi extends Al Bataeh deal until 2027

Sports Desk

Iranian Farhad Majidi will stay on as Al Bataeh head coach until 2027 after signing a two-extension to his contract with the Emirati top-flight club on Tuesday. The former Esteghlal manager, who had been without a job since parting ways with Ittihad Kalba in March 2024, made an impressive return to a managerial role at the UAE ADNOC Pro League with Al Bataeh midway through the newly-finished campaign. The 48-year-old Iranian took charge in January and steered the relegation-threatened club to five victories – including massive wins against Sharjah and Al Wahda – and four draws in 15 games as Al Bataeh finished 11 points clear of the drop zone. Al Bataeh had managed two wins in 12 outings, suffering eight defeats, was just a couple of points above the bottom two before Majidi replaced Croatian Goran Tomic on the bench. In his previous spell in the UAE Pro League, Majidi led Kalba to 17 wins in 51 outings in all competitions across two



Iranian head coach Farhad Majidi (L) poses with an Al Bataeh shirt after signing a two-year extension with the Emirati club in Sharjah, UAE, on June 10, 2025. ● albataehfc.ae

seasons, steering his team to an all-time best finish (eighth) in the table in the 2022/2023 campaign. Widely regarded as an Esteghlal legend, Majidi was

also in charge of the Tehran Blues' bench when they went a whole season without a single defeat to lift a first Persian Gulf Pro League trophy in nine years in 2022.

Basketball Champions League Asia: Tabiat crashes out after OT loss to Utsunomiya

Sports Desk

Iranian club Tabiat's debut campaign at the Basketball Champions League Asia came to an end after a 94-93 loss to Utsunomiya Brex in the second overtime in Wednesday's last-eight clash at

Dubai's Coca-Cola Arena. American guard D. J. Newbill registered a game-high 29 points, including five three pointers, as well as 10 assists to play the biggest part in the victory for the Japanese side, with Makoto Hiejima (18), Finn Delany (15), and Isaac

Fotu (11) also finishing in double figures. Croatian center Ivan Buva had a double-double (27 points, and 15 rebounds) for Tabiat, followed by Sina Vahedi (19 points), Stedmon Lemon (18), and Arman Zangeneh (15).

Cultural significance of Minab handcrafted earthenware

Iranica Desk

In southern Iran, where the sun warms palms and the soil has a centuries-old relationship with human hands, pottery art continues to thrive. This warm, patient spirit is vividly alive in the traditional workshop of Ali Fakhari in Hakami village of Minab, Khuzestan Province; a place where the pottery wheel still turns, the kiln still glows, and the clay remains in the artist's hands, transforming into cultural artifacts.

In an era when many traditional crafts have faded, pottery making in Minab remains deeply connected to the local identity. With over six decades of experience, Ali Fakhari stands among the last artisans practicing this craft, continuing to produce diverse earthenware using only traditional methods and without industrial tools.

Each of his creations serves a specific purpose in the daily life of southern communities. For instance, Jahleh is used to keep water cool during hot summers, while Marzab regulates water flow in traditional gardens. Hookahs are common in local tea houses. More than simple containers, these objects embody history, function, and beauty, as noted by chtn.ir.

Nestled alongside a garden and a road in the heart of Hakami village, Fakhari's workshop embodies authenticity and continuity. Everything is natural and locally sourced: a wooden hand-driven wheel, regional clay, a wood-fired kiln, and bricks made from village soil. His craft persists with the same patience and precision of previous generations, which explains why his works are distinguished by their quality, durability, and unique aesthetic.



Unlike many mass-produced items, Fakhari's earthenware vessels carry a soul and a human touch. This trait makes them highly appealing and valuable not only to local and international tourists but also to collectors and art lovers. Hakami and Shahvar villages

are two prominent centers of traditional pottery in Minab. The area's distinct soil, rich indigenous culture, and hot, dry climate have helped ensure the sustainability of this craft, while also creating opportunities for tourism, employment, and education.

These villages are well-positioned to host pottery workshops, cultural tourism tours, regional exhibitions, and craft markets. With targeted support, Minab's pottery could become a recognized brand of handicrafts in southern Iran. Ali Fakhari is more than a pot-

ter; he is a living storyteller of tradition, creativity, and regional experience. Although these stories remain to be fully documented, each movement of his hands and every vessel he molds convey a part of them. Supporting veteran artists

like him is vital — not just to preserve their craft but also to maintain a way of life and promote intergenerational knowledge transfer. In a world where interest in local cultures is waning, figures like Fakhari should be recognized, documented, and protected as national cultural treasures.

Despite challenges such as rising fuel costs for traditional kilns and waning youth interest in manual trades, his workshop still shines brightly — symbolizing hope, motivation, and his profound love for this art. Lessons from other regions show that with strategic support — such as establishing local pottery training centers, offering fuel subsidies, easing product sales in urban and online markets, and promoting handicraft tourism — it is entirely possible to turn artisans like Fakhari into inspirational models for future generations.

In addition to the traditional pottery of Minab, Khuzestan Province boasts a rich array of handicrafts that reflect its diverse cultural tapestry. Among these, the intricate weaving of carpets and textiles stands out, showcasing patterns and techniques passed down through generations. These handcrafted textiles often depict local motifs and scenes from daily life, embodying both artistic expression and cultural identity.

Overall, Khuzestan Province's handicrafts not only serve as practical items but also as symbols of regional pride and cultural continuity. Supporting these diverse crafts, through promotion and preservation efforts, can enhance local economies and foster a deeper appreciation of Khuzestan's rich heritage.

Role of Bilankuh neighborhood in cultural legacy of Tabriz

Iranica Desk

Bilankuh, also known as Vilankuh, is one of the neighborhoods of Tabriz, East Azarbaijan Province. Its fame largely derives from several significant tombs of renowned figures buried there. Notable among them are the tombs of Akhi Sad-al-Din, the great mystic of the 13th century; Kamal-al-Din Masud Khujandi, the famous poet of the 14th century; Kamal-al-Din Behzad, the renowned painter of the 16th century; and others. According to historical investigations, Bilankuh has an age of approximately 1,000 years.

The distance of this neighborhood from the historic fabric of Tabriz suggests that Bilankuh was likely a simple village during the 10th and 11th centuries, gradually connecting to the city as it expanded. During the Ilkhanid era, the foundation of the educational complex of Rab'-e Rashidi significantly enhanced the area's importance. The 14th century is considered the golden age of Bilankuh, marked by the construction of various valuable sites and tombs that testify to



its vital role in Tabriz's historical landscape. Rab'-e Rashidi, an important

educational and cultural complex established during the Ilkhanid period, contributed

to the neighborhood's prominence. It was founded during the reign of Rashid-al-Din

Hamedani, a prominent vizier and historian, in the 13th century. The complex served as a

hub for learning, science, and culture, shaping the intellectual life of Tabriz and the surrounding region.

The historical core of this town was developed under Rashid-al-Din's guidance. After his death, the complex was plundered and confiscated. His elder son, Mohammad, ordered the reconstruction of the ruined structures. However, following his assassination, subsequent invasions inflicted further severe damage to the entire complex.

Today, the neighborhood remains a testament to its rich historical past, with its ancient tombs, religious sites, and the remnants of Rab'-e Rashidi reflecting its importance across different eras in Tabriz's history.

Tabriz, one of Iran's oldest cities and has historically been a major commercial hub due to its strategic location along the Silk Road, facilitating trade between East and West. The city has witnessed numerous invasions, conquests, and cultural exchanges, which have enriched its diverse architectural and cultural heritage.



Minister: Russia's Cultural Week chance to 'strengthen historic ties'

'Living Traditions of Russia' on display in Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

Russian Culture Minister Olga Borisovna Lyubimova on Tuesday kicked off Russia's Cultural Week in Tehran with Iranian Culture and Islamic Minister Abbas Salehi, stressing a shared "broad historical relationship" and pledging closer artistic and cinematic cooperation between the two countries.

The joint press conference, held at Tehran's iconic Vahdat Hall, marked the start of a six-day cultural program under the recently signed

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership treaty between Moscow and Tehran. The event, which includes concerts, film screenings, and exhibitions in Tehran and Isfahan, features more than 130 Russian artists, musicians, and officials, IRNA reported. The week officially opened in Iran with a rich program of events taking place in Tehran and Isfahan from June 10 to 15. The opening ceremony of the week in Isfahan was held with performances by the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra and the

Lezginka State Dance Ensemble from Dagestan. In turn, Tehran hosts an exhibition titled 'Living Traditions of Russia', featuring Russian handicrafts and traditional arts. Salehi described Russia as "more than a neighbor," saying the two countries have long-standing literary and artistic ties, invoking names like Chekhov and Dostoevsky.

"Tolstoy's work was among the top five best-sellers at Tehran International Book Fair," he said, citing this as proof of Iranians' deep engagement with Russian culture. Standing alongside him, Lyubimova expressed gratitude for Iran's hospitality, calling the opening a "bridge for future cooperation."

She said her delegation includes musicians, and artisans from regions as diverse as Dagestan and Kamchatka. "We're a nation made of many ethnicities," she noted, adding that Russian traditional dance, music, and crafts are "living symbols" of this cultural mosaic. The Russian minister emphasized cinema and animation as key areas for joint ventures. She confirmed that her team would tour a Tehran film production village, where a Russian film is currently in production. "Iran's capabilities in animation are impressive—we are ready to collaborate," she said.

Salehi, addressing potential cooperation in the fashion industry, said Iran's diverse clothing design could be a "serious avenue" for deeper cultural exchange. "It's a sector ripe for attention," he noted.

At a separate ceremony the same day, Mohammad-Mehdi Imanipour, head of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, and Lyubimova inaugurated the Russian folk art exhibi-



Russian Culture Minister Olga Borisovna Lyubimova (L) and Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi stand at the podium during the opening of Russia's Cultural Week at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on June 10, 2025.

● IRNA



Russian Culture Minister Olga Borisovna Lyubimova (3rd R) tours the exhibition titled 'Living Traditions of Russia', featuring Russian handicrafts and traditional arts in Tehran on June 11, 2025.

● ICRO



tion 'Living Traditions of Russia' at Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran. Imanipour described the show as a cultural anchor supporting the two countries' strategic plans. "Despite being neighbors, we still don't know each other well," he noted, blaming what he called a "fabricated fear" driven by the West. "We need events like today's to change that." Lyubimova highlighted several standout exhibi-

its, including ivory sculptures from Kamchatka, ceramic pieces from Pskov, and works from the Caucasus and central Russia. "These pieces speak for themselves," she said. "They carry our artistic tradition across borders."

ECO chief backs Iran as 'pioneer' in health tourism

Social Desk

Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Asad Majeed Khan on Wednesday called Iran a "symbolic leader" in regional health tourism, spotlighting the western city of Hamedan as a standout destination. Speaking at the third ECO Health Tourism Confobition in Hamedan, Khan said the city—with its "valuable historical and medical assets"—embodies the potential of cross-border health services across member states, IRNA reported. The three-day conference and exhibition, running through June 13, brings together officials, industry leaders, and health experts from ECO's 10 member states. With

10 licensed international patient departments (IPDs), Hamedan is pushing to the forefront of Iran's broader push to attract foreign medical tourists—part of a national plan to hit \$6 billion in revenue by drawing 2 million health travelers by 2030. "This is more than travel. Health tourism means knowledge sharing, cultural exchange, and sustainable development," said Khan. He praised Iran's role in founding ECO, calling its health sector "a pillar" in advancing regional cooperation. Referring to Hamedan as the home of Avicenna, the father of modern medicine, he said the city offers a rare mix of medical history and clinical infrastructure. The exhibition features forums on



Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Asad Majeed Khan addresses the audience at the third ECO Health Tourism Confobition in Hamedan on June 11, 2025.

● IRNA

topics like artificial intelligence in health tourism, regional development strategies, and medical system integration across member

countries. Events are held at Bu-Ali Sina University, the International Exhibition Center, and Hamedan's Chamber of Commerce.

Deputy Health Minister Sajad Razavi underlined Iran's leadership in the field, crediting its "geostrategic position and expert personnel." He said Iran acts as "a vanguard in regional health" and urged ECO nations to prioritize public health as a cornerstone of development. "Without a health appendix, no regional growth plan is complete," Razavi told participants. Drawing from Avicenna's philosophy, he stressed the emotional element of healing: "Half the pain is illusion; the other half is hope." Iran is not just competing, it's collaborating. Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri, who announced the imminent ratification of a comprehensive national tourism road-

map, said, "This is not a race. This is a pact for empathy, coexistence, and shared resilience." More than 1.2 million medical tourists visited Iran in 2023, a figure expected to nearly double in the next five years. With 28 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and cutting-edge clinics offering competitive prices, the country is leaning into its soft power to stake its claim in the health tourism market. According to Salehi Amiri, "Health is not just an economy—it's a language of shared humanity." The confobition concludes on June 13 with site visits to historical landmarks and medical centers in Hamedan, giving international delegates a closer look at the facilities licensed to treat foreign patients.

Iran honors veteran filmmaker Sirus Alvand with top artistic title

Arts & Culture Desk

Sirus Alvand, one of Iran's most enduring filmmakers, received the nation's top artistic honor on Wednesday at a ceremony in Tehran, formally recognizing over five decades of influential work in cinema. The first-degree art certificate was presented to Alvand, 72, during a June 10 gathering hosted by Cinema Organization of Iran, IRNA reported. The event drew senior officials including Raed Faridzadeh, head of the organization, and cultural critics who praised Alvand's ethical grounding and creative consistency as a "rare thread" in the country's shifting cinematic landscape. The honor places Alvand among a short list of

Iranian artists whose work has shaped both public sentiment and the trajectory of the national film industry. Known for acclaimed titles such as 'Once and For All' and 'Corrupted Hands', Alvand's films have long bridged Iran's commercial and intellectual cinema—what one official described as the "missing link" between mass appeal and cultural weight. "His name gives meaning to the title, not the other way around," said Faridzadeh, praising the director's lifelong adherence to ethical storytelling and social roots. Alvand began directing in the early 1970s and was quickly noted for his strong narrative voice and nuanced focus on the Iranian family unit. Critics at the event emphasized his resistance to politicization, with veteran reviewer Javad Tou-

si calling Alvand's moral compass "a vanishing quality" in the country's increasingly fragmented society. Despite moments of sharp societal critique, Alvand has remained firmly grounded in Iran. "He never reached for opposition labels," said Tousei, arguing that the director's loyalty to his homeland helped preserve both his career and voice through decades of political change. Fellow filmmaker and screenwriter Farhad Tohidi, also in attendance, recalled Alvand's pivotal role in shaping Iran's modern screenwriting tradition. "He was the one people came to," Tohidi said, noting that even in eras when "screenwriting barely had a name," Alvand's pen and presence offered a benchmark for the craft. Beyond directing, Alvand was credited with



defending civil and professional institutions in Iranian cinema, including his contributions to preserving the integrity of the House of Cinema.