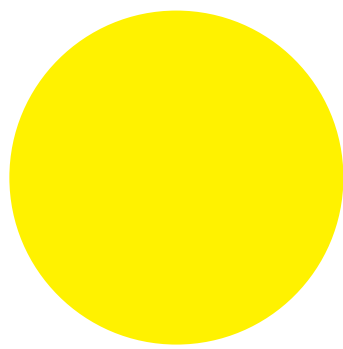


UN envoy: Tehran open to regional nuclear consortium

Iran rejects limits on missile power, stresses enrichment on own soil



Iran Daily

Vol. 7867 ● Sunday, June 29, 2025 ● Tir 08, 1404 ● Muharram 03, 1447 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages



irandaily.ir

newspaper.irandaily.ir

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Heroes on Shoulders

Iran bids glorious farewell to martyrs of Israeli aggression



Mourners take part in a mass funeral held in Tehran on June 28, 2025 for 60 nuclear scientists, commanders and civilians killed in Israel's aggression against Iran.
● SAJJAD SAFARI/IRAN DAILY.

A watchman-turned-actor;

Grossi's costly legacy for global peace

By Kamran Yeganegi
Foreign policy expert

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

In the realm of international relations, oversight bodies must be pillars of stability and impartiality; their legitimacy derives not from hard power but from soft trust. Yet, when a watchman, instead of safeguarding peace, becomes a facilitator of crisis, one must ask: Where did the failure occur? Within the institution itself or its leadership? The contemporary embodiment of this question is undoubtedly the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its Director General, Rafael Grossi. Over the past two years, a series of IAEA reports marked by contradictory claims, ambiguous formulations, and questionable timing have done more to escalate tensions than to resolve the Iranian nuclear dossier. The apex of this trend came in the spring of this year amidst heightened confrontations between Iran and Israel, culminating in a 12-day conflict ignited, as many analysts attest, by a half-baked IAEA report.

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China's Iran oil imports hit record 1.8m-plus bpd in June



Volleyball Nations League: Iran finds momentum in Week 2



Yazd's goldsmithing tradition bridging cultural identity, tourism growth



Cutting-edge strategies to safeguard Iran's green lungs

INTERVIEW



Venezuela honors Iranian anchor who stayed on air during Israeli attack



Heroes on Shoulders

Iran bids glorious farewell to martyrs of Israeli aggression

National Desk

Iran held a funeral on Saturday for some 60 scientists, commanders and civilians killed during this month's Israel's aggression against Iran with large crowds of mourners dressed in black filling the streets in the capital Tehran.

At least 16 nuclear scientists and 10 senior commanders were among those mourned at the funeral, including Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Commander General Hossein Salami, and IRGC Aerospace Force chief General Amir Ali Hajizadeh.

Their coffins were driven into Tehran's Azadi Square adorned with their photos and national flags, as crowds waved flags and some reached out to touch the caskets and throw rose petals onto them.

Of the 60 people who were laid to rest, four were children.

In attendance were President Masoud Pezeshkian and other senior figures including Ali Shamkhani, an adviser to Iran's Leader, who was seriously wounded in an Israeli attack on his residence.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the martyred Iranians had given their "blood" during the 12-day war with Israel but "not honor".

"Iranians gave blood, not land; gave their loved ones, not honor; they withstood a thousand-ton rain of bombs, but did not surrender," he said on his Instagram account, adding that Iran does not recognize the word "surrender".

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei, who attended the procession, paid flowing tributes to the victims of the Israeli aggression in a message on X.

"Today, the zealous people of Iran carry on their shoulders, with heavy sorrow but standing steadfast and powerful, some of their purest and most patriot-



Mourners take part in a mass funeral held in Tehran on June 28, 2025 for 60 nuclear scientists, commanders and civilians killed in Israel's aggression against Iran.
● SAJJAD SAFARI/IRAN DAILY

ic sons and daughters – commanders, elites, athletes, women and children of this land – who were martyred during the war imposed by the aggressor Zionist regime, and with indescribable respect, they lay them to rest on the soil of their homeland like mythical heroes; so that each one may become a seed for the growth of other heroes," he wrote.

Iran says more than 600 people, mostly civilians, were killed in Israeli and US aggression against Iran.

Israel began its unprovoked aggression against Iran on June 13 with attacks on Iran's military sites, nuclear farcalities and residential areas. The United States also joined the conflict with



strikes on three Iran's nuclear sites last weekend.

According to Iranian Health Ministry figures, 610 people were killed on the

Iranian side in the war before a cease-fire went into effect on Tuesday. More than 4,700 were also injured in the Israeli attacks.

UN envoy: Tehran open to regional nuclear consortium

Iran rejects limits on missile power, stresses enrichment on own soil



Amir Saeid Irvani
● AFP

International Desk

Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations said on Friday that Tehran is open to a regional nuclear consortium as a solution to put an end to decades of tensions over Iran's nuclear program.

"Iran has consistently sought a peaceful solution to address any potential concerns regarding its nuclear program. What is essential is that Iran's rights as a responsible member of the NPT are

properly recognized. We seek no more and no less than the rights granted to any other NPT member," Amir Saeid Irvani said in an interview with Al-Monitor news website on Friday.

The Iranian envoy the regional nuclear consortium was discussed during the last round of indirect US-Iran talks and that the Islamic Republic is ready for any nuclear-related cooperation across the region as "a consortium could very well be one of the forms such cooperation might take."

Irvani said Tehran is willing to "collaborate with all countries in our region that operate nuclear reactors — whether on issues of reactor safety or the supply of reactor fuel," provided that such a move is a "complementary initiative" and not a substitute for Iran's domestic nuclear program.

"Iran still insists that enrichment must be carried out on its own soil. A consortium might serve as a supplement to our nuclear program, but it is by no means a substitute for it," he said.

"We would be prepared to transfer our stockpiles of 60% and 20% enriched uranium to another country and have them transferred out of Iranian territory in return for receiving yellowcake." Asked if Iran would limit enrichment to the auspices of the consortium operating within Iran, Irvani told the news outlet, "In principle, we have no objection to that; however, we should consider it based on the details of any potential proposals we receive."

According to media reports, US West Asia envoy Steve Witkoff had proposed to Tehran in talks preceding the Israeli-US aggression on June 13 the creation of a nuclear consortium potentially including Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and the United States.

No to cap on Iran's missile power

The Iranian diplomat also touched upon the issue of Iran's missile power, saying that the Islamic Republic will not acquiesce to any restrictions imposed on its

missile power.

"Iran will not accept any restrictions on its missile activities. The recent aggression demonstrated clearly that without Iran's military capabilities, the other side would never have been compelled to request a cease-fire," Irvani said.

The Iranian ambassador touched on US President Donald Trump's acknowledgement that the damage inflicted on Israel was "so severe, in fact, that it became one of the decisive factors prompting the regime to request that the United States expedite a cease-fire."

"Therefore, Iran will never agree to relinquish such an effective strategic lever, nor will it allow itself to be disarmed in the face of potential future attacks," Irvani said.

Iran launched a barrage of missiles on the occupied territories in response to the regime's 12-day aggression against Iran. The Israeli regime was then forced to accept a cease-fire to end the conflict with Iran.

Araghchi condemns Trump's 'disrespectful' comments on Iran's Leader

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday condemned as "disrespectful and unacceptable" remarks by the US president who has claimed to have saved the Iran's Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei from assassination during Israel's aggression against Iran.

"If President Trump is genuine about wanting a deal, he should put aside the disrespectful and unacceptable tone towards Iran's Supreme Leader, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei, and stop hurting his millions of heartfelt supporters," Araghchi posted on his account on social media platform X.

"The Great and Powerful Iranian People, who showed the world that the Israeli regime had NO CHOICE but to RUN to 'Daddy' to avoid being flattened by our Missiles, do not take kindly to 'Threats and Insults,'" the foreign minister said.

"The complexity and tenacity of Iranians is famously known in our magnificent carpets, woven through countless hours of hard work and patience. But as a people, our basic premise is very simple and straightforward: we know our worth, value our independence, and never allow anyone else to decide our destiny," the top diplomat wrote.

"If Illusions lead to worse mistakes, Iran will not hesitate to unveil its Real Capabilities, which will certainly END any Delusion about the Power of Iran," he stated.

"Good will begets good will, and respect begets respect."

His remarks came three days after the Israeli regime was forced to accept a unilateral cease-fire after being pounded by Iranian missiles for 12 days.

A watchman-turned-actor ...

This report was not only technically dubious but was issued at a time when the international community desperately needed calm and restraint. Assertions such as "reduced technical cooperation by Iran" and "uncertainty regarding the peaceful nature of the nuclear program," released amid explicit Israeli threats, effectively tilted the narrative in favor of the aggressive party, presenting a one-sided version of reality.

More troubling still is Grossi's media-centric approach, transforming the watchman into a visible player in geopolitical contests—contrary to the Agency's technocratic mission. It is self-evident that sensitive technical information should not be broadcast on the global stage without thorough

review and prior opportunities for dialogue and persuasion.

What is the cost of such behaviors? Beyond the loss of lives on both sides of the 12-day war and the erosion of diplomatic processes, perhaps the gravest damage is the collapse of trust in international institutions. These bodies, which should shelter nations from weapons and propaganda, now function as part of the chain that intensifies crises.

Meanwhile, Iran—as the country that has, more than any other actor, refrained from walking away from the negotiation table—has every right to question: Has Grossi and his team truly remained impartial? And will the historical memory of nations recognize this conduct as that of a "neutral watchman"?

In the Iranian diplomatic tradition, a clear distinction has always been made between an institution and its leadership. Today's critique is directed at the IAEA's management, not its existence. We still believe in the necessity of a scientific, non-political, and professionally principled oversight body in the nuclear arena; but restoring trust demands that honesty in discourse and transparency in action replace the current approaches.

The conclusion of this note is not to condemn an individual but to call for institutional reflection. The Agency must return to its primary mission: preserving peace through knowledge, not sowing doubt through suspicion. If the watchman becomes an actor himself, then who will guarantee fair judgment?



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



China’s Iran oil imports hit record 1.8m-plus bpd in June

Economy Desk

China's oil imports from Iran surged in June as shipments accelerated before the recent Israeli 12-day imposed war against Iran and demand from independent refineries improved, analysts said. The world's top oil importer and biggest buyer of Iranian crude brought in more than 1.8 million barrels per day from June 1-20, according to ship-tracker Vortexa, a record high based on the firm's data, Reuters reported. Kpler's data put the month-to-date average of China's Iranian oil and condensate imports at 1.46 million bpd as of June 27, up from one million bpd in May. The rising imports were fueled in part by an increase in available supplies from floating storage after export loadings from Iran reached a multi-year high of 1.83 million bpd in May, Kpler data showed. It typically takes at least one month for Iranian oil to reach Chinese ports. Robust loadings in May and early June mean China's imports from Iran are poised to remain elevated, Kpler and Vortexa analysts said. Independent Chinese "teapot" refineries, the main buyers of Iranian oil, also showed strong demand as their stockpiles depleted, said Xu Muyu, Kpler's senior analyst. A possible relaxation of US sanctions on Iranian oil could further bolster Chinese buying, she added.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday signaled a potential easing in enforcement to help the country rebuild, however he said that Washington had not given up its maximum pressure campaign on the country - including restrictions on Iranian oil sales. Marking a significant shift from his so-called maximum pressure campaign, Trump said that China can keep buying oil from Iran. The development came more than a month after he warned China that it would face harsh penalties if it continued to buy oil from Iran. The US president had signed a presidential memorandum on February 4 ordering a campaign of maximum pressure on Iran. His remarks came hours after the Israeli regime was forced to halt its aggression against the Islamic Republic as Trump showed reluctance in further American involvement in the war. For this week, Iranian Light crude oil was being traded at around \$2 a barrel below ICE Brent for end-July to early-August deliveries, two traders familiar with the matter said, compared to discounts of \$3.30-\$3.50 a barrel previously for July deliveries. Narrower discounts were spurred by worries that oil flows could be disrupted through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway between Iran and Oman, traders said. Market fears for a closure of the choke-point escalated after last



weekend's US attack on Iranian nuclear sites but eased following the US announcement of a mutual halt in fighting on Tuesday after the US announced that the two sides accepted to cease fire on Tuesday. Iran asserted that it did not initiate the conflict, but it agreed to a ceasefire following a period of intense fighting. Tighter discounts for Iranian oil come amid a retreat in futures

prices. ICE Brent crude futures hovered at \$68 per barrel on Friday, their level before the Israel-Iran conflict began and down 19% from Monday's five-month peak. Iran's overall crude exports likely slowed in the second half of June amid the Israeli and US airstrikes, Kpler, Vortexa and a third vessel tracking firm told Reuters. The country's total crude ship-

ments have slowed to a monthly average of 1.5 million bpd so far in June, according to Kpler, down from a five-week high of 2.2 million bpd in the week starting June 16. Vessel tracking firm Petro-Logistics also estimated that shipments dropped in the second half of June after a strong start to the month. "Crude exports in the first half of the month were at multi-year

highs as Iran rushed to export cargoes following the Israeli attacks of June 13," Daniel Gerber of Petro-Logistics told Reuters. "While there appears to have been a slowdown since then, we assess that crude loadings have continued largely uninterrupted." A big drop in exports from Iran, OPEC's third-largest producer, would tighten global supplies and likely support oil prices.

IMF forecasts \$1.7t Iranian economy with \$51b growth in 2025



Economy Desk

The International Monetary Fund, in its review of the outlook for 13 key macroeconomic indicators of Iran's

economy for the current year, has forecast a \$1.7 trillion economy for Iran this year, reflecting a \$51 billion increase in the value of Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared to

the previous year. The IMF, in a report, has analyzed the outlook for Iran's economy in the new calendar year and announced its projections for 13 key macroeconomic indicators of Iran for this year, Tasnim reported. Based on projections by the IMF, Iran's economy will reach \$1.7 trillion in the current calendar year, and the value of Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in this year will reach \$1.746 trillion, reflecting a \$51 billion increase compared to the previous year. However, the per capita GDP based on PPP, which was \$17,222 in 2024, will decrease to \$17,103 in 2025. The fund has projected that the value of Iran's Gross Domestic Product based on current prices will decrease by \$60 billion in 2025 compared to 2024, falling from \$401 billion in 2024 to \$341 billion in 2025. The IMF further forecasts a positive current account balance for Iran of

\$3 billion for the year. This projection indicates an expected surplus in the country's international transactions for goods, services, and primary income. This report expects Iran's economic growth rate to approach zero in 2025. While Iran's economy experienced 3.4% growth in 2024, it is projected to grow by only 0.3% in 2025. Iran's inflation rate was 32.6% in the past calendar year. The fund has projected that this figure will increase to 43.3% in 2025. Whereas Iran's exports of goods and services grew by 4.6% in 2024 according to IMF estimates, the financial institution expects Iran's exports of goods and services to decline by 5% in 2025. Conversely, Iran's imports of goods and services, which grew by 10.6% last year, will decrease by 9.6% in the new year. Iran's current account balance in 2025 will be \$7.9 billion less than in 2024, reaching \$3 billion. In the previous

year, the figure was estimated at \$10.9 billion. The international institution has also projected that Iran's unemployment rate in the new year will be higher than the previous year, reaching 9.5%. Iran's unemployment rate was calculated at 7.7% in 2024. According to this report, the Iranian government's revenue, which was equivalent to 10.6% of GDP in 2024, will reach 9.5% of GDP in the current year. Meanwhile, government expenditures will increase slightly, rising from 14.7% of GDP in 2024 to 14.9% of GDP in 2025. Iran's gross government debt will also increase in 2025, rising from 36.8% of GDP last year to 39.9% in the current calendar year. Total investments in Iran's economy during the previous year were equivalent to 39% of the country's GDP. Based on the international fund's projection, the figure will remain unchanged at the same level in 2025.

Foreign trade remained stable during 12 day-war: TPO



Economy Desk

The deputy head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) announced the stability of the country's foreign trade during the 12 days of Israeli-imposed war against the country, saying, "Achieving the \$60 billion export target during the current year is still possible." Mohammad-Sadeq Qanadzadeh, referring to the status of foreign trade following the recent ag-

gression by the Zionist regime, stated, "The flow of goods entry and exit at land and sea borders continued without interruption, and the country's port infrastructure also sustained no damage," IKNA reported. He emphasized the country's logistical preparedness and the immediate decisions of the government, commending the performance of customs in expediting the clearance of goods. "Trade with Iraq through land borders has con-

tinued, and with the Emirates, we have also returned to normal conditions," Qanadzadeh said. "If conditions remain stable, achieving the \$60 billion export target this year is still possible." Qanadzadeh also reported increased cooperation with member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Pact, and BRICS, stating, "Countries such as Qatar and Pakistan have also announced their readiness for increased cooperation."

Zagros forests in peril

60 years of relentless damage


By Hamid Zahrabi
*Deputy of Iran's
Department of
Environment*
O P I N I O N

The Zagros issue has been put on the front burner for the Department of Environment. We are currently gathering input from various segments of society. We have invited university experts and researchers to weigh in, hoping that together, we can break down the challenges. Any future action plan will be drawn up with the full participation of all stakeholders. Iran holds a unique position in terms of biodiversity, sitting at the crossroads of several ecosystems and climates. The country boasts nine out of the world's 11 ecosystems and harbors 41 out of 42 wetland types globally. These facts alone speak volumes about Iran's extraordinary biodiversity. Within our borders, two biodiversity hotspots — Hyrcanian and Zagros-Anatolian — overlap, making Iran one of only about 30 such regions worldwide to host more than one hotspot. To protect this wealth, we have set aside 327 protected areas, including 44 national natural monuments, 33 national parks, 55 wildlife refuges, and 195 protected zones, covering nearly 20 million hectares, or 12% of the country's land. These areas were mapped out to take in multiple ecosystems and diverse plant regions, ensuring that a significant portion of our natural heritage falls under protection. Iran is home to over 8,600 plant species, a third of which are endemic. Our knowledge of our animal species is also now broader, but we have fallen short on invertebrates — a gap that needs to be closed. The country hosts 209 mammal species, 23 amphibians, 274 reptiles, 302 fish, and 579 bird species, along with around 970 marine fish species.



This drives home the point that Iran's biodiversity is both significant and irreplaceable. The oak tree is the hallmark of the Zagros, with wild pistachio and hawthorn also making up its landscape. The region is recognized as a biodiversity hotspot within the Iran-Anatolia area. About 2.3 million hectares of the Zagros are under formal environmental protection, with an additional 750,000 hectares designated as no-hunting zones, bringing the total to over three million hectares — one million hectares, or 20%, of which are forested. Roughly 10 million people call the Zagros home. Over the past 50 years, unsustainable exploitation has whittled down the forest mass by four meters. The Zagros faces a perfect storm of challenges. Climate change

has upended rainfall patterns, while decades of overuse have taken a toll. Unsustainable practices have pushed these forests toward decline. Overgrazing, for example, has gone far beyond the land's capacity, to the point where natural regeneration has ground to a halt in many areas. It is now rare to come across oak saplings of varying ages, except in a handful of protected spots. This trend points to a forest system heading down a slippery slope toward destruction, which in turn sets off a chain reaction of soil erosion and dust storms. These problems feed off each other, ramping up the pressure. Pests and diseases are also getting in on the act. Many experts believe that these species always existed here, but the ecosystem had the ability to keep them in

check. However, our relentless pressure has weakened the ecosystem, opening the door for pests and diseases to run rampant. Economic hardship is another major factor. When people find themselves under the gun financially, the natural environment is often the first to take a hit. Unsustainable exploitation — such as turning to charcoal production from Zagros wood, or resorting to illegal cultivation — brings about serious consequences. Wildfires, both natural and man-made, only add fuel to the fire. In one county alone, there have been more than 50 fires in a single area, a worrying sign that underscores our vulnerability and shows that we are on the verge of losing our best and densest forests.

The way forward is to bring all metaphorical stakeholders to the table and give them a stake in conservation. If we stick to the three pillars of global biodiversity protection — conservation, sustainable use, and fair benefit-sharing — we can pull off lasting protection for the Zagros. Past management methods, especially those that shut out stakeholders, have fallen flat. The evidence is plain to see in the problems cropping up across the region. While the creation of protected areas has paid off to some extent, if we want our conservation efforts to stand the test of time, it's clear that the path we've gone down so far is not the right one.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

“It is now rare to come across oak saplings of varying ages, except in a handful of protected spots. This trend points to a forest system heading down a slippery slope toward destruction, which in turn sets off a chain reaction of soil erosion and dust storms. These problems feed off each other, ramping up the pressure.”

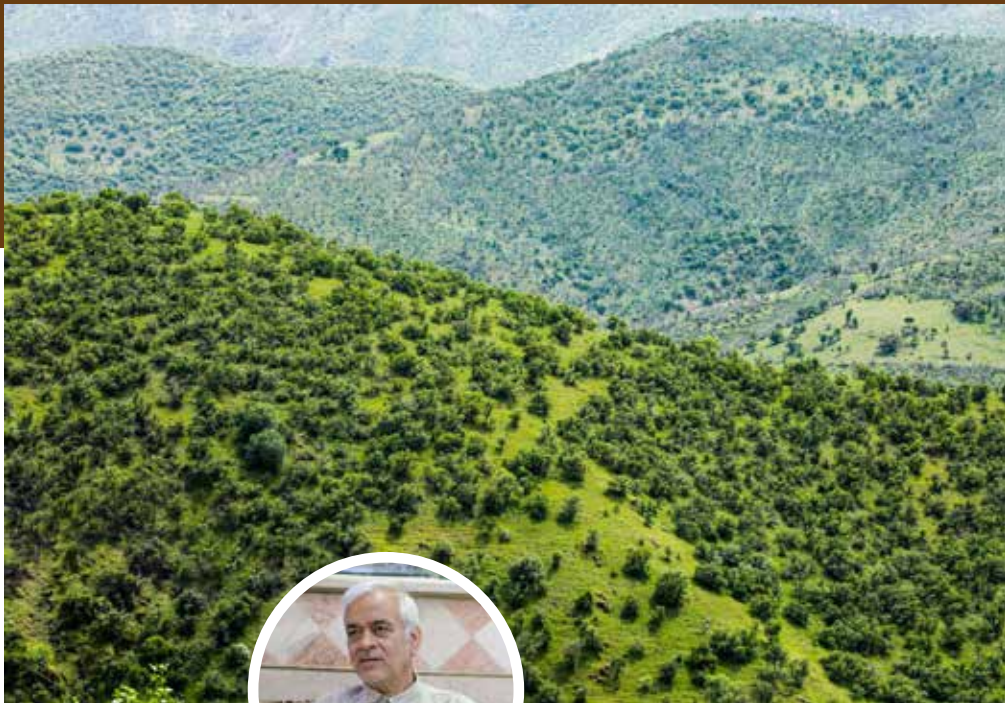


Fallen oak trees lie stacked in the Zagros Mountains of Iran, felled to produce charcoal for Basht city.

● IRNA

Cutting-edge strategies to safeguard Iran’s green lungs

INTERVIEW According to recent studies, the Zagros forests are home to 30 million people across Iran. These forests, fed by major rivers such as the Karun, Karkheh, Seimare, Sirvan, Zarrine Rud, and Zayandeh Rud, as well as vital groundwater reserves, play a pivotal role in sustaining life and livelihoods from the country’s northwest to Khuzestan Province in the southwest. Stretching over 1,000 kilometers, the Zagros forests cover western Iran, spanning provinces like West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Lorestan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Khuzestan, Isfahan, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Fars, and parts of Hamedan and Markazi. The numbers show that Khuzestan and West Azerbaijan have the smallest slice of the Zagros woodland pie, with just 5.4% coverage, while Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad take the lion’s share at 57%. Ilam province, as a key region in this ecosystem, covers 20,000 square kilometers and stands out for its forest cover, with 640,000 hectares of both natural and planted trees. The Zagros forests, among Iran’s most critical natural reserves, have come under fire due to climate change and human interference. A few weeks ago, Ali Alizadeh Aliabadi, head of the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands, headed out to Ilam to size up the state of the forests and nurseries on the ground, reporting his findings in the following interview:



Ali Alizadeh Aliabadi ● SEYED MOSLEH PIRKHEZRANIAN/IRNA

Based on your fieldwork, how do you assess the state of Ilam’s forests?

ALIZADEH ALIABADI: The main goal of this visit was to check up on and monitor the Zagros forests and the natural areas in southern Ilam. Fortunately, efforts to ramp up sapling planting in the province’s dry and hot regions have paid off with very positive results. In the colder parts of Ilam, steps have been taken to restore and enrich the forests — a blueprint that could be rolled out in other Zagros provinces. Right now, the Zagros forests are grappling with serious issues like dwindling rainfall, rising temperatures, and drought, which have led to thinning and decline in many areas. These tough conditions have made it hard for trees to naturally regenerate and left them open to pest attacks, such as wood-boring beetles.

Besides climate change, what other challenges threaten the Zagros forests?

A major headache is the spike in dust storms and airborne particles caused by dried-up wetlands and dust hotspots. This not only takes a toll on human health but also hits the forests hard. The dust has seriously weakened the Zagros trees and plants, and when combined with higher temperatures, has set the stage for outbreaks of pests like oak bud and leaf borers. It’s crucial to note that pests are part of the forest’s natural cycle and sometimes flare up. But human interference, such as farming under the forest canopy and over-the-top pesticide spraying, can tip the balance, fueling pest surges and disrupting the ecosystem. Without sound, science-based management, these problems will only snowball and deal further blows to the Zagros forests.

How does human activity harm the forests?

Unrestrained and unscientific meddling in recent years has stirred up big trouble for the forests. One such action is plowing up the undergrowth and introducing monoculture farming, which chips away at biodiversity. Repeated pesticide spraying to control forest pests — without sticking to scientific guidelines — puts the living forest ecosystem on the line and could wipe out plant diversity, beneficial insects, and natural seeds, including oak. Letting livestock run rampant in the forests is another pressing issue. Grazing on saplings and fresh seeds throws the ecological balance off and opens the door to more pests, while undercutting the forest’s ability to regenerate. These unsound practices leave the forests more exposed to environmental threats.

As the head of a research institute, what’s your view on pesticide use to tackle pests?

Research shows that pests are part of the forest’s natural rhythm, and if left alone, their numbers drop off naturally. For instance, the American white butterfly, which was spotted in Iran’s forests a few years back, has now vanished. Of course, new pests like the oak bud borer have cropped up in some areas, but such ebb and flow among pest species is normal in nature. Going overboard with pesticides not only fails to do the trick but can actually make matters worse. Besides being costly, blanket spraying can wipe out beneficial insects and upset the forest’s ecological balance. Sustainable management and forest conservation can only take root with the backing of local communities, environmental groups, and tighter controls on harmful human activities.

What’s the most effective scientific approach to pest control?

These days, we can’t just fall back on old-school methods like spraying. Instead, we need to get a handle on the pests’ life cycles, pinpoint their natural enemies, and boost and release those enemies into the wild to keep pest populations in check. Given the limits of spraying — especially since many infested trees are tucked away in hard-to-reach, mountainous areas — the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands of the Ministry of Agriculture is leaning into modern scientific methods. Spraying often misses the mark due to poor timing and technique. For example, if spraying is needed, it should go ahead during the first and second larval stages, but most spraying ends up happening in later stages,

which doesn’t move the needle. Proper timing is also key — spraying should be carried out early in the morning or at dusk for best results. In the end, we need to break away from quick fixes and dead-end methods and embrace a comprehensive, science-backed approach to forest pest management. Our research shows that spraying in forests not only fails to deliver but also wastes resources and damages the living ecosystem.

What should be done to preserve and sustain the Zagros forestlands?

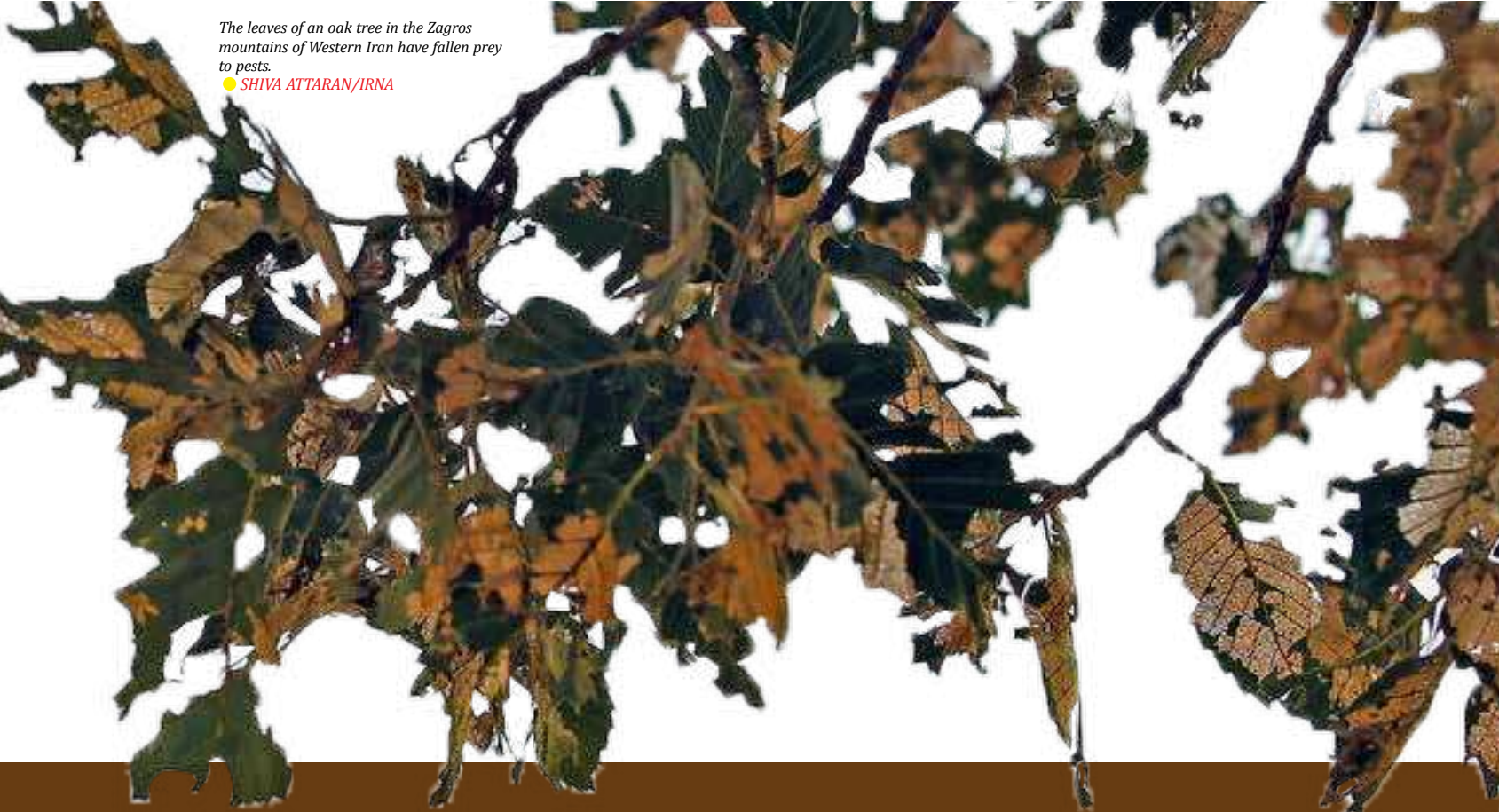
One of the most crucial steps is planting saplings and enriching severely damaged areas. Successful examples of this approach were rolled out in Ilam province between 2011 and 2021 and could serve as a model for other provinces. Our main goal is to bring these forests back to their natural state through enrichment projects, shielding them from drought, dust storms, and other environmental pressures. Currently, the Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands is looking into how dust storms impact the Zagros trees. These studies are still in their infancy, and we’re gathering data to get a clearer picture of how dust, drought, and other stresses chip away at tree health. Given the complex links between dust storms and the gradual decline of oak trees, it will take more time to get to the bottom of this connection.

What’s the outlook for the national “One Billion Tree Planting” project? Is it actually doable?

The “One Billion Tree Planting” initiative, which kicked off last year, has been overhauled based on early experiences of planting saplings and is now being rolled out nationwide. Research from our institute shows that planting a billion trees is both feasible and necessary. This project will bolster forest areas and help revive these regions using a scientific, principled approach. In the Zagros region, with around 6 million hectares of forest, planting saplings can enrich existing woodlands. Plus, “tree farming” along rivers and farmlands is on the table as a sustainable way to grow forests. If done right, this project could breathe new life into the forests and boost biodiversity.

Are there any joint research projects with international organizations on Iran’s forests? Sadly, there are no international projects underway in the Zagros region, but in the Hyrcanian forests of northern Iran, programs with international partners are in full swing. Some native Iranian plant species have been sent off to countries like Germany and Denmark, where they have taken root and even spread in local forests. In return, some European saplings have made their way to Iranian research stations such as Chamestan in the north. This exchange aims to test whether non-native saplings can adapt to Iran’s forest ecosystems in the face of climate change. The main question is whether “some existing trees in the Hyrcanian forests can be replaced by non-native saplings”. This approach mirrors what European countries have done to revive their forests using species from other regions, like southern Europe or the Hyrcanian forests. Iran’s international partnerships with countries like Germany and Denmark are still going strong and play a key role in sharing scientific know-how and experience. Ultimately, to protect the nation’s forests — especially in sensitive areas like the Zagros — we need to zero in on sustainable management, scientific methods, and ramped-up cooperation at home and abroad to safeguard these precious, dwindling resources. With its unique climate and geography, Iran boasts a wide range of forests and rangelands. This diversity means each region’s plant cover stands apart from the rest, underscoring the need to look after natural habitats more than ever. Ilam province, a standout region for forest habitats, covers two million hectares — 1.7 million of which are forest and rangeland. These lands host a variety of trees and shrubs such as oak, pistachio, hackberry, wild almond, hawthorn, jujube, eucalyptus, and other native species. More than 90% of Ilam’s forest cover is made up of diverse oak species, with 32 distinct varieties, making it one of the country’s top hotspots for forest biodiversity. Currently, Ilam’s forests span over 640,000 hectares, highlighting the critical need for proper, sustainable management — especially in the face of threats like drought, wildfires, dust storms, and unauthorized human activity.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



The leaves of an oak tree in the Zagros mountains of Western Iran have fallen prey to pests. ● SHIVA ATTARAN/IRNA

Volleyball Nations League: Iran finds momentum in Week 2

Sports Desk

Unlike the first week of action, Iran got off to a flying start in Week 2 of the Volleyball Nations League in Belgrade, Serbia.

Having managed a single victory in four outings in Week 1 – a 3-2 win against Ukraine on the final day in Rio de Janeiro – Roberto Piazza's men defeated the host 3-1 in their opening game in the Serbian capital, and then beat Argentina by the same scoreline on Friday.

Iran took the first set 25-21 before Argentina – on three wins in five prior to the game – bounced back with a 25-22 win in the second set.

Iran, however, restored the lead in the third set (25-22) and then fought back from five points down early in the fourth set to win 25-22 and collect the maximum three points – a first triumph for the Asian powerhouse over the South American opponent in six years.

Outside-hitter Morteza Sharifi topped the scoring for Iran with 14 points, with Ali Haqqarast contributing 13 – including six in the final set.

Argentina opposite Pablo Sergio Koukartsev chipped in a game-high 18 points, while Luciano Palonsky (15) and Agustin Loser (14) also finished in double figures.

Despite a third successive win, Piazza said his team still needs to

improve for the future games in the preliminary phase.

"We have to understand how to play [against an opponent] with a fast tempo like today, so it gave us a really big lesson," Italian Piazza said after the game, adding: "We were a little bit late [at some stages] and that can be a problem in the future."

Asked how his men recovered from a five-point deficit in the fourth set, the Italian said: "That's a good question. I really don't know. I need to ask them, because their culture is different and I have to understand them."

"I made some substitutions [midway in the fourth set] and they started to believe that was possible [to win the game]. After one block I guess the mood changed totally."

The bad news for Piazza was that Sharifi would miss the remaining two games in the second week against Germany and the Netherlands after suffering a foot injury in the closing stages.

Hopping to progress to the VNL Finals for the first time since 2022, Iran will visit Gdańsk, Poland, for Week 3 – starting with a game against the home side on July 16.

An all-Asian encounter will see Iran take on China a day later at the Ergo Arena, followed by games against Olympic champion France (July 19) and Bulgaria (July 20).



Iranian middle-blocker Mohammad Valizadeh goes up for a spike during a 3-1 victory over Argentina at the FIVB Volleyball Nations League in Belgrade, Serbia, on June 27, 2025.

● FIVB



● MNA

World Deaf Futsal Championships: Iran beats Brazil to lift the trophy

Sports Desk

Iran won a fourth title in five editions at the World Deaf Futsal Championships, thanks to 2-0 victory over Brazil in Montesilvano, Italy. Ali Zeinalvand and Ali-Asghar Mahboubi were on the scoresheet in the final showpiece as Mahdi Sanei's men rounded off their campaign in emphatic fashion, claiming an impressive eight wins in as many outings in the competition.

Having lifted the trophy in the 2011, 2015, and 2022 editions, Iran began its title defense with a 12-1 rout of Morocco in the group stage, before defeating Italy (1-0), Uruguay (9-0), England (11-0), and Poland (3-1) to finish atop the group table. Iran then hammered Kuwait by seven unanswered goals in the quarterfinals, followed by a 3-2 win against Croatia in the last four.

There further joy for the Iranians in the awarding ceremony as Mahboubi took the top scorer prize with 15 goals, while Sanei was the named the best coach.

Alireza Mokhtar-Abadi won the Most Valuable Player prize, with Mohammad-Hassan Abdollahi taking the award for best young talent in the tournament.

Earlier on Friday, Italy defeated Croatia 2-1 in the men's third-place showdown.

Wilder scores stoppage KO of Herndon for first win in three years

BBC – Former heavyweight world champion Deontay Wilder returned to winning ways with a low-key comeback victory, stopping the overmatched Tyrrell Herndon in the seventh round in Kansas.

Wilder dropped his fellow American in the second round, scored another knockdown in the sixth, and closed the show with two chopping right hands a round later, prompting the referee to wave it off. After a torrid few years – three defeats in his previous four bouts, most recently a punishing loss to Zhilei Zhang in Saudi Arabia – Wilder registered his first win since October 2022.

But while it was a dominant performance, it was far from vintage Bronze Bomber.

Once the most feared puncher in the division and perhaps the greatest one-

shot finisher of all time, the old Wilder would likely have dispatched Herndon earlier and to more fanfare. With a sparse crowd at the Charles Koch Arena in Wichita and no major television broadcast, it was a modest setting for a fighter who once shook arenas and

headlined pay-per-view events against the likes of Tyson Fury.

"I've been laid off for a long time, getting myself back together, repairing myself emotionally. It is just nice to be back in the ring. This is a new beginning for me," the 39-year-old said.



● GETTY IMAGES

Ivankovic and China part ways

AFC – Branko Ivankovic has left his role as head coach of the China PR national team after his side were eliminated from the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26 earlier in June.

The 71-year-old Croatian was removed from his role as a result of his team's fifth place finish in Group C, which ended the country's hopes of a first FIFA World Cup appearance since their debut at the Finals in Korea-Japan in 2002.

"The Chinese Football Association expresses gratitude to Mr. Branko Ivankovic and his coaching staff for their dedicated efforts during their tenure with the men's national team and their contributions to Chinese football," the CFA said in a statement.

"We wish Mr. Ivankovic all the best in his future work and life." Ivankovic had been appointed in February 2024 to replace Aleksandar Jankovic following a disappointing performance at the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 during which the Chinese failed to score in their three group phase matches, resulting in elimination.

He oversaw an immediate upturn in fortunes and the team qualified



● AFP

for the third round of Asia's preliminaries for the FIFA World Cup 2026.

That phase of the qualifiers started poorly for China PR, with a 7-0 defeat at the hands of Japan at Saitama Stadium followed by losses against Saudi Arabia and Australia.

A 2-1 win over Indonesia in Qingdao in October kick-started the campaign, however, and a subsequent 1-0 victory over Bahrain rekindled Chinese hopes of a place in the fourth round of the preliminaries. But losses to Japan, Saudi Arabia,

Australia and, crucially, Indonesia ended Chinese prospects of a place in the next round, with a 1-0 win over Bahrain in the last qualifier on June 10 only enough to deliver a fifth place finish in the Group C standings.

Dejan Djurdjevic, who led China PR during the AFC U20 Asian Cup in Shenzhen in February, have been appointed to replace Branko in a caretaker capacity and will lead the team at the East Asian Football Federation E-1 Football Championship in Korea Republic next month.

Yazd’s goldsmithing tradition bridging cultural identity, tourism growth



Iranica Desk

The national identity and history of each land play a significant role in the development of tourism and regional economy. Preserving and promoting this heritage not only contributes to the revival of traditional culture and arts but also plays an important role in attracting both domestic and international tourists. Cultural tourism, by utilizing historical sites, architecture, handicrafts, and rituals, provides unique opportunities to showcase Iran’s rich culture and assists in the sustainable development of regions. Furthermore, the development of handicrafts — considered one of the indicators of cultural heritage — not only ensures the preservation of traditional arts but also serves as a source of income and employment for local communities. Various cities across Iran leverage their distinctive cultural identities in their journey



toward becoming tourist destinations, benefiting from this reciprocal relationship. Yazd, the capital city of central province of Yazd, has managed to create a unique attraction for tourists by focusing on preserving traditional architecture and restoring old windcatchers. Hosting cultural festivals and handicraft exhibitions — such as carpet weaving, confectionery making, and basketry — plays a crucial role in attracting tourists and boosting local industries. According to reports from

the public relations department of the Yazd Provincial Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, a significant meeting was held with the presence of related national and provincial officials in Yazd Chamber of Commerce. During this meeting, experts discussed the integration of tourism and handicrafts and their impact on eco-tourism and increasing Yazd’s appeal. One of the important topics was the plan to register Yazd as a UNESCO world heritage city for its traditional jewelry arts and to harness the potential of this craft

in attracting tourists and enhancing Yazd’s brand. Emphasizing the promotion and branding of Yazd’s exquisite handicrafts and their attractive packaging for guests and ambassadors was also a focal point. The celebration of Yazd’s UNESCO world heritage registration was another key subject discussed. Traditional jewelry of Yazd, including gold, silver, and other materials, has always attracted attention due to its authenticity, antiquity, variety in design, innovation, and high purity. Yazdi craftsmen have long been skilled in goldsmithing and gold extraction, even attracting other provinces seeking to mold their gold in Yazd. The gold jewelry industry in Yazd dates back approximately 600 years, making it one of the prominent goldsmithing centers in Iran. Estimates show that around 2,000 artisans are currently active in designing and crafting traditional jewelry



in Yazd. This industry not only boasts a rich history and deep roots but also continues to hold a prominent position in both domestic and international markets thanks to the creativity and innovation of its artisans. Yazd’s gold is not only valuable economically but also stands as a cultural and artistic symbol, reflecting a deep heritage recognized in both global and national markets. UNESCO has registered Yazd’s traditional goldsmithing art on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List to introduce the world to this exquisite Iranian craft.

Yazd’s gold narrative embodies a rich cultural history passed down through generations, shaping the identity of its people. The city is considered the birthplace of goldsmithing art, dating back to ancient times, with discoveries of old jewelry from the Parthian era. Over the past two thousand years, Yazd has been recognized as the main center for gold jewelry production; historical gold pieces made for kings and prominent figures across centuries serve as proof of this. Development applications include:

Artistic tourism: Attracting domestic and international tourists to specialized art routes in Yazd, familiarizing them with the jewelry-making process, and providing opportunities to purchase exquisite crafts
Branding and exporting: Registering Yazd’s gold as a global brand and expanding target markets in Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and European countries
Education and employment: Developing training programs in this craft at vocational centers and universities and creating job opportunities for young people
Revival of traditional workshops: Supporting workshops that have shut down in recent years due to high costs and fierce competition
Overall, a concurrent focus on cultural heritage and handicrafts can serve as a bridge for sustainable tourism development and economic growth in Yazd and other historic cities across Iran.

Jasb; a mountainous habitat with rich biodiversity

Iranica Desk

Jasb village is a mountainous area located near the Panzdah-e Khordad Dam, in the northern part of Delijan, Markazi Province. The Jasb district comprises seven villages situated in a valley that stretches approximately 50 kilometers on both sides

of the Azna River. The river flows mainly from March to June and is located at an elevation of nearly 1,200 meters above sea level. There is a protected habitat area in Jasb, covering over 17,000 hectares. This forested habitat connects to the heights of Palang Darreh Mountain to the north, the

Delijan plain to the south, Qamrud to the west, and the Karkas Mountains to the east. In the western and southwestern parts of Jasb, various plant species grow, including *Prunus scoparia*, fig trees, *Pistacia atlantica*, barberry, hawthorn, and spurge. The region is also home

to diverse animal species, such as leopards, boars, wolves, goats, sheep, deer, rabbits, and numerous bird species — including eagles, sparrowhawks, see-see partridges, kestrels, quail, and buzzards. Additionally, parts of Jasb’s mountainous habitat host tropical plant species and animals like goats, bezoar ibex, partridges, and leopards.

Delijan is located in the southeast of Markazi Province, at an important intersection point. It lies along the Isfahan-Tehran Road, approximately 409km from Tehran. Historically, Delijan was a prominent city, featuring

four gates on each side. It is believed that its boundaries once extended nearly to Khorreh. One of the natural tourist attractions in Delijan is the Chal-Nakhjir Cave, also known as Delijan Cave. Its historical relics — such as earthenware, ditches, and beautiful bricks — serve as

evidence of its antiquity and cultural significance. Thanks to its strategic geographical position, Delijan gradually developed over time and was officially designated as a township in 1980. Today, Delijan is recognized as an industrial hub and is home to several notable carpet companies.





Venezuela honors Iranian anchor who stayed on air during Israeli attack

Arts & Culture Desk

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro awarded the Simon Bolivar National Journalism Prize to Iranian news anchor Sahar Emami, who gained international attention for resuming her broadcast moments after an Israeli airstrike hit her Tehran studio. Maduro granted the national journalism award to Emami, who showed "exemplary courage" during the June 16 Israeli attack on Iran's state television headquarters. The award also honors media personnel killed in the strike on the Islamic Republic of Iran News Network (IRINN), IRNA reported. Iran's ambassador to Venezuela, Ali

Chegini, accepted the prize on behalf of Emami and the families of those killed in the attack during a ceremony at Venezuela's National Journalism Day celebration.

Emami became a household name across the Middle East after video footage showed her briefly leaving the anchor desk when the Israeli strike shook the IRINN studio building. Minutes later, she returned "unshaken and resolute" to resume the live broadcast, earning widespread praise for her composure under fire.

The June attack came after Israel issued evacuation warnings for the Tehran area where the television studios are located. The explosion filled the

studio with dust and debris during the live broadcast, forcing Emami to duck for cover before returning to continue reporting.

Iranian Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei praised Emami's actions, and she has since become a symbol of defiance in Iran. Images of Emami "facing the camera with a defiant gaze, her index finger raised in the air" have circulated widely on social media.

The Simon Bolivar Prize recognizes outstanding journalism and is named after the South American independence hero. Venezuela's state media broadcast the award ceremony live across multiple national television channels.



Iranian director bags Canadian Oscar-qualifying festival nominations



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Ramin Hosseinpour scored nominations in two categories at Canada's Oscar-qualifying Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival (TINFF) for his documentary short 'Sculpture', festival organizers announced. The director landed nominations for Best Director and Best Film in the documentary category at TINFF, which runs from September 6 to 13, 2025, in Toronto. The festival gained recognition as a Canadian Screen

Award qualifying event through approval from the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television, cinemajournal.ir reported.

Hosseinpour also swept four awards at the 22-year-old Accolade Global Film Competition in San Diego in June 2025, taking home honors for Best Director, Best Short Documentary, Best Writing and Best Screenplay.

The filmmaker will serve on TINFF's international industry panel, participating in specialized sessions, professional roundtables and official programs during the

festival. The awards ceremony and red-carpet event will take place within the same September timeframe.

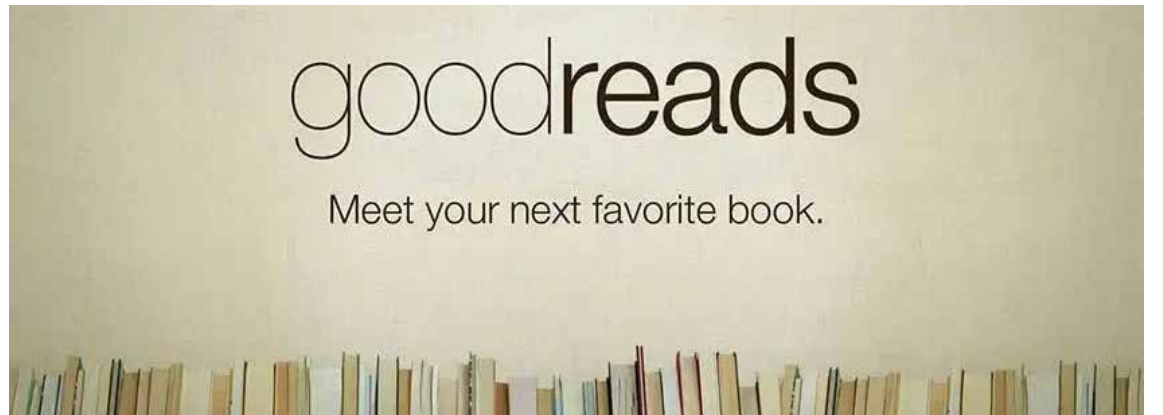
'Sculpture' tells the story of 13th-century Persian poets Rumi and Shams Tabrizi, drawing from historical documentary sources. The film competes in both short film and video art categories at international festivals and is currently vying for qualification for the 2026 Academy Awards, Canadian Screen Awards and BAFTAs.

The director is currently producing his next short film 'The Claimant,' focusing on the life of Persian poet Attar, a prominent Persian poet and mystic from Nishapur.

International critics describe Hosseinpour's work as documentary-based narratives that blend visual and conceptual aesthetics with architectural structure and musical composition.

The Accolade Global Film Competition, operating since 2003 in San Diego, California, ranks among America's most established independent artistic events in film and visual media. The competition uses specialized jury systems while focusing on discovering global creative talent.

Amazon's Goodreads blocks Iranian users citing US sanctions, sparks outcry



Arts & Culture Desk

Goodreads, the Amazon-owned book social network, has come under fire after suspending accounts of Iranian users without warning in recent days, citing US sanctions. The move triggered widespread criticism from users and digital rights advocates who say it amounts to "digital discrimination." Founded in 2006 and acquired by Amazon in 2013, Goodreads has long served as a global platform for readers to review books, share notes, and connect over literature. But over the past several weeks, dozens of Iranian users discovered their accounts had been deleted or locked — in some cases, wiping out years of activity, Tasnim reported.

The users said they received no prior notice. When they attempted to reach

Goodreads support, they were redirected to Amazon's identity verification email, which demanded personal documents, including passports, proof of residence, and job records from the past 50 days.

"These requirements were never mentioned in the site's terms of use," one user told Iranian news outlet Tasnim, calling the move "arbitrary and invasive."

This isn't the first time Goodreads has targeted Iranian users. In 2019, a similar wave of account suspensions coincided with a new round of US sanctions on Iran. But users and critics argue the current actions go further, severing access to non-commercial, non-political spaces with no financial element.

"Goodreads is not a bank or a marketplace. It's a place to talk about

books," reads a statement from a user-organized petition that has begun circulating online. The petition urges Amazon to end "nationality-based suspensions" and restore affected accounts.

Some users, who had contributed hundreds of reviews and book annotations, say years of work disappeared overnight.

Digital rights advocates warn that such enforcement, under the broad umbrella of US sanctions, is expanding beyond business or finance and infringing on free expression.

"If left unchecked, this could spread to users in other countries," the petition adds. "We must defend the global right to read and be heard."

Amazon has not responded to multiple requests for comment. Goodreads has remained silent on the issue.

Iran orders 'immediate' deportation of illegal foreign nationals



Social Desk

Iran's prosecutor general on Saturday ordered all unauthorized

foreign nationals to leave the country "immediately," threatening legal action against violators and property seizures from land-

lords who rent to undocumented immigrants.

Mohammad Kazem Movahedi Azad issued the directive during a memorial ceremony in Hamedan province, specifically targeting Afghan nationals who have been living in Iran without proper documentation, IRNA reported.

"Foreign nationals, especially our Afghan brothers and sisters whom we have hosted for years, should help ensure unauthorized individuals leave Iran in the shortest possible time," Movahedi Azad said, adding that violators would face judicial action. The crackdown extends beyond

deportations. Border Guard Commander Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi announced that rental agreements with Afghan nationals would be declared void under the new policy. "Any house or property rented to Afghans will have its contract nullified, and the property will be sealed and confiscated," Goudarzi said.

The border commander described the move as responding to "public demand" for organizing unauthorized foreign nationals, according to state media reports.

Iran has hosted millions of Af-

ghan refugees for decades, but the Islamic Republic has faced mounting economic pressure from international sanctions and growing public discontent over resource allocation.

Movahedi Azad also called on authorized foreign residents to report individuals who have collaborated with the Zionist regime, promising leniency for those who voluntarily turn themselves in.

The prosecutor general's office did not specify a timeline for the deportations or provide figures on how many unauthorized foreign nationals currently reside

in Iran.

Iran's relationship with its Afghan population has deteriorated since the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, with Tehran periodically announcing mass deportation campaigns that have displaced thousands of families.

The new directive represents one of the most comprehensive crackdowns on undocumented immigrants in recent years, potentially affecting hundreds of thousands of Afghan nationals who fled to Iran seeking economic opportunities or escaping conflict.