

Pezeshkian extols national unity, solidarity in face of Israeli aggression

2 >



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## Top EU diplomat: Return to diplomacy on Iran's nuclear file to benefit bloc

2 >



## Araghchi says 12-day war result of Israel's impunity granted by West

**Lavrov:** SCO reiterates commitment to Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy

2 >

Foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), including Iran's top diplomat Abbas Araghchi (3rd R), pose for a family photo in Tianjin, China on July 15, 2025.  
● AFP

### European trio wants snapback, but can it handle blowback?

#### EDITORIAL

The threat to reinstate sanctions on a nation that has stood firm against two nuclear powers has raised serious doubts about whether its intended outcomes can be realized—and the costs of enforcing it may far outweigh any benefits. The inclusion of the “snapback” mechanism in the JCPOA was meant to preserve the fragile trust built through two years of negotiations before the 2015 deal. That trust has since been shattered by attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities. While invoking snapback may further affect Iran's economy, it remains questionable whether it will serve the interests of Germany, France and Britain. A month into Israel's war on Iran, Europe has brandished the snapback sword—but its real-world effectiveness is being called into question. The mechanism, originally designed to reduce chronic skepticism, now seems to have eroded confidence further between Iran and the remaining European signatories to the tattered deal. Germany, France and the UK have leaned on this clause despite

their own inaction since May 2018, when the US walked away from the deal and began its unravel. Europe justifies its threat of triggering the snapback of sanctions appealing to two conflicting views about Iran's nuclear capacity following Israeli and US strikes. One, voiced by the US President Donald Trump, claims the attacks effectively ended Iran's nuclear drive. The other, drawn from intelligence assessments—even Western ones—argues that at best, the strikes only delayed Iran's program. In that light, Europe is forced to address a simple question: if Iran's nuclear program has been neutralized, why trigger snapback? And if not, how can ratcheting up pressure now halt it? Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi cautioned diplomats in Tehran: the Europeans risk making the same error as the US by opting for snapback, only tightening the diplomatic noose. “The same mistake the Americans made by moving toward a military option, Europeans can also make by heading toward snapback and pushing diplomacy into a dead end,” Araghchi warned.

Page 2 >



### Iran's largest rooftop solar plant goes online in Mashhad

3 >



### FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B: Iran hammers Mongolia to stay top of group

6 >



### Dehloran's landmarks, natural heritage sites attract tourists

7 >



### Iran's minister hails eco-lodges as backbone of rural tourism revival

8 >



# Araghchi says 12-day war result of Israel's impunity granted by West

*Lavrov: SCO reiterates commitment to Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy*

## International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Tuesday called a recent aggression by Israel against Iran a result of an "absolute immunity" that is granted by the regime's Western allies for committing any crime in the Middle East region.

"In fact, the Israeli aggression against Iran is a direct result of the absolute immunity granted by the United States and certain European countries to the regime; an immunity that allows this regime to commit any crime in our region without fear of being held accountable," Araghchi said in an address to a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in China.

"It is deeply regrettable that, over the past two years, the international community has failed to take effective measures to put an end to the genocide of the Palestinian people or to bring

about an end to the Israeli regime's occupation of neighboring Arab territories."

Araghchi underlined that the problem of insecurity in the region will remain unresolved as long as Israel continues its "lawless and roguish behavior" with the support of its allies.

On June 13, Israel launched an unprovoked act of aggression against Iran, assassinating many high-ranking military commanders and nuclear scientists.

The Israeli attacks also targeted military and nuclear sites as well as vital non-military infrastructure, including a building of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), Evin Prison, health-care centers, outreach facilities, and both residential neighborhoods and rural communities, inflicting widespread civilian harm. These attacks caused over 900 civilian fatalities.

"It is of great importance that the extent of these crimes—and the extremely

dangerous consequences of letting the Israeli regime get away with occupation, apartheid, genocide, and warmongering across the West Asia region — be properly understood and condemned," the Iranian foreign minister said.

Araghchi called on the SCO to promptly review the situation regarding the recent Israeli aggression against Iran, urging the body to adopt measures offering Tehran essential political backing and related support.

He proposed "establishing a permanent mechanism to monitor, document, and coordinate responses to military aggression, acts of sabotage, state-sponsored terrorism, and violations of member states' national sovereignty." At the end of the meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who also attended the meeting, said the SCO member states reiterated their commitment to uphold Iran's legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Russian foreign minister said no



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks at a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in China on July 15, 2025.  
● mfa.gov.ir

individual, including inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, has so far presented any evidence contradicting Tehran's declaration of pursuing a peaceful nuclear path.

He added that any possible deal on Iran's nuclear issue must not violate Tehran's legitimate rights – as a member of the IAEA and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – regarding

its capability to enrich uranium for energy-related purposes.

Both officials held talks on the sidelines of the SCO meeting during which the Russian foreign minister once again reiterated the importance of resolving the issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program solely through political and diplomatic means, and in accordance with international law.

## Top EU diplomat: Return to diplomacy on Iran's nuclear file to benefit bloc

### International Desk

The EU foreign policy chief said on Tuesday that returning to the path of diplomacy and negotiations on Iran's nuclear issue will benefit the bloc amid tensions between Tehran and Europe over Iran's nuclear issue.

"Returning to the path of diplomacy and resuming negotiations with Iran serves our interests. We stand ready to facilitate this process," Kaja Kallas told reporters before a meeting with foreign ministers from the 27 EU countries in Brussels.

In recent months, Iran and three European powers – France, Germany and Britain, who are also parties to the 2015 nuclear agreement – have held several meetings on Iran's nuclear issue – the latest held on June 20 in Geneva.

The meeting in June was held after the fifth round of nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington, which Iran decided not to continue over the Israeli-US aggression against the



Kaja Kallas  
● AFP

Islamic Republic.

Remarks by Kallas came amid threats by the three European countries – known as E3 – to activate a so-called snapback mechanism against Iran, which would reimpose a broad range of international sanctions on Iran that had been suspended under the 2015 nuclear pact. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said on Tuesday that France, the United Kingdom and Germany will launch the UN snapback mechanism on Iran by the end of August at the latest if no concrete progress has been made on a

nuclear deal by then.

"France and its partners are ... justified in reapplying global embargoes on arms, banks, and nuclear equipment that were lifted 10 years ago. Without a firm, tangible, and verifiable commitment from Iran, we will do so by the end of August at the latest," Barrot told reporters ahead of the EU foreign ministers' meeting.

"The threat to use the snapback mechanism lacks legal and political basis and will be met with an appropriate and proportionate response from the Islamic Republic of Iran," Iran's Foreign

Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei told a press conference. The 2015 deal with Britain, Germany, France, the US, Russia and China – known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – states that if the parties cannot resolve accusations of "significant non-performance" by Iran, the "snapback mechanism" process can be triggered by the 15-member UN Security Council.

"The European parties, who are constantly trying to use this possibility as a tool, have themselves committed gross and fundamental violations of their obligations under the JCPOA," Baqaei said.

"They have failed to fulfill the duties they had undertaken under the JCPOA, so they have no legal or moral standing to resort to this mechanism."

The US withdrew from the deal in 2015 and the European parties to the deal failed to fulfil their commitments under the deal. In response, the Islamic Republic began to scale back its JCPOA commitments.

## Pezeshkian extols national unity, solidarity in face of Israeli aggression



Masoud Pezeshkian

### International Desk

Iran's president praised the nationwide unity and solidarity achieved after the Israeli regime's aggression on the country, saying those who had even been unjustly treated over the years threw their weight behind the Islamic Republic in the wake of the imposed 12-day war.

Masoud Pezeshkian, in a ceremony at Iran's Ministry of Cooperative, Labor and Social Welfare on Tuesday, hailed the unity among Iranians as "priceless," saying they displayed an unprecedented and honorable image of bravery by foiling the enemy's plots.

"The Zionist regime imagined that after martyring the commanders of our country's Armed Forces, who had dedicated their lives to the glory of Iran, the Islamic Establishment would face challenges; however, the wisdom of Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei] and the immediate appointment of successors to the martyred commanders, coupled with the Armed Forces' powerful defense, thwarted the enemy's plots," Pezeshkian said.

"The Iranian people did a greater and more important job; the enemy's plan was that within a short time after the start of its attacks, the people would go rogue and take to the streets, and the Islamic Republic of Iran would collapse, but the people also stood up to the enemy and neutralized its conspiracies," he added. The Iranian president empha-

sized that even those who had been wronged and treated unfairly, including those in prison or those who had left the country due to dissatisfaction, rose to defend the country.

"The ones we lost in those 12 days were indeed very valuable and dear, but the consensus and empathy we gained are far more precious. Iran belongs to all of us, regardless of race, gender, language, ethnicity, or religion, and anyone interested in serving the country and its people should have the opportunity to serve solely based on their merits and capabilities," Pezeshkian said. "We must strive to preserve the unity, cohesion, and empathy created in the country and spare no effort in building and developing Iran."

On June 13, Israel launched a blatant and unprovoked act of aggression against Iran, assassinating many high-ranking military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians.

More than a week later, the United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In response, the Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occupied territories as well as the al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military base in West Asia. On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the illegal assault.

## European trio wants ...

In practical terms, Iran's economy would feel the sting of reimposed UN sanctions. Banking and trade ties would be choked, insurance coverage limited, and inspections of oil shipments ramped up—opening the door to seizure of Iranian vessels on the high seas, disrupting its commerce.

Moreover, a return to Chapter VII status at the UN would deal a blow to investor confidence, petrifying markets, scaring off global banks and corporations, and stalling foreign investment. For that reason, Iran has consistently shunned the activation of snapback, using all possible diplomatic levers to prevent Europe from pulling the trigger.

Yet the European troika must remember: Iran, both before and after the JCPOA, weathered the toughest sanctions the UN imposed and still managed to carve out its own path. Those sanctions fell short of their objectives, which is why the US and Europe even sat down at the negotiating table in the first place. Faced

with two nuclear-armed enemies and standing firm on its lawful resistance, Iran considers such threats no longer credible. Snapback offers Europe nothing it does not already have.

If the snapback threat is meant as a diplomatic punishment, it will expose Europe's ignorance of Iran's strategic culture and its defiant posture. Iran refuses to be broken by unfounded sanctions, having spent two decades arguing convincingly that it has no need for punishment. Resorting to snapback would threaten the principle of "dignity" in its foreign policy doctrine, and Iran's reaction would be even stronger.

Following the recent bombing of its nuclear sites, Iran does not see itself as a criminal—but as the aggrieved—thus, it will not back down, but press forward through alternative avenues.

For the EU and its members, invoking snapback now would mark a pivotal—and dangerous—turning point in relations with Iran.

As Araghchi said: "it would spell the end of Europe's role on Iran's nuclear issue, and perhaps the darkest moment in Iran's relations with the three European countries; a point from which recovery may never come."

When the trio ultimately enforces snapback and returns Iran's file to the UN Security Council, they will face a tough question: if Iran and the US soon resume talks and strike a deal, what position will Europe take—given its lack of independent leverage against Washington? Will they simply fall in line—and if so, with what standing? Will Iran ever trust a European troika that has been obstinate once more?

Tehran has so far shown goodwill toward Europe, seeking trust-based dialogue—but the ball is now in Europe's court. At a time when the Middle East needs rational diplomacy from the West—and must drop coercion in favor of negotiation—snapback could seal a path to nowhere. Diplomacy remains the only viable path and no other road lies ahead.



# Iran’s largest rooftop solar plant goes online in Mashhad

**Economy Desk**

The second phase of Iran’s largest rooftop solar power plant – with a 1.2-megawatt capacity – entered operation Tuesday in Mashhad, northeastern Iran.

Khorasan Razavi Governor-General Gholamhossein Mozaffari and provincial officials inaugurated the project, which was constructed through private sector investment at the Mashhad Aquatic Waves Sports Complex, as reported by Mehr.

"The second phase of the country's largest rooftop solar power plant, with a capacity of 1.2 megawatts, has been commissioned at Mashhad's Aquatic Waves Sports Complex," Mozaffari stated.

Addressing journalists at the event, Mozaffari commended the project team for prioritizing clean energy alongside aquatic infrastructure, noting the second phase's completion in under 25 days set a valuable benchmark.

Noting this complex's pioneering role in rooftop solar installations, the governor added, "It has been proposed

to hold intensive meetings within one week to assess covered spaces across the province – particularly factories and industrial facilities."

"Priority goes to powering industrial operations first. Any surplus during peak demand feeds back into the grid. Aquatic Waves' success – generating excess power during high-demand periods – sets a blueprint for other industries."

Citing nationwide energy deficits and industrial strain, the governor-general asserted, "Accelerating solar and renewable energy projects is now an urgent national imperative." He advocated weekly renewable project launches to mitigate provincial energy shortfalls.

The government had granted all administrative departments a deadline - effective June 21 - to supply part of their required electricity from solar energy.

Meanwhile, Abdolvahid Mahdavinia, CEO of Mashhad Electricity Distribution Company, said, "Iran's solar irradiance ranges from 4.5 to 5.5 kW/m<sup>2</sup> – a superb potential compared to Germany's 2.3 kW/m<sup>2</sup>, despite Germany lead-

ing in per-capita solar installations."

Mining targets 3,000 MW solar

The Iranian Mines & Mining Industries Development & Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) is advancing large-scale solar initiatives across mineral industries per its developmental mandate and Ministry of Industry directives, IRNA reported.

The strategy aims to curb fossil fuel reliance, optimize energy, boost efficiency, and reduce pollution, reflecting IMIDRO's sustainable development commitment.

Planned solar capacity totals 2,958 megawatts nationwide. With 215 megawatts currently operational, 843 additional megawatts will launch by year-end, accelerating renewable energy targets.

IMIDRO maintains momentum despite significant obstacles, including insufficient grid infrastructure, costly substations, complex land allocation, local opposition, and protracted permitting/equipment clearance. The organization facilitates development through cross-agency coordination, regulatory



simplification, and private investment support.

Solar power deployment across mining industries promises sustainable energy while positioning IMIDRO as crucial to national energy security, sustainable growth, and environmental stewardship.

## Three wastewater treatment projects launched in Tehran

Dams in capital plunge to 14% amid worst drought in 60 years

**Economy Desk**

Three wastewater treatment projects in Lavasan, northeast of Tehran, were inaugurated on Tuesday in the presence of Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi.

The projects, valued at 1.1 trillion tomans (approximately \$12 million USD), include the commissioning of Module 2 at Lavasan Treatment Plant with its collection network, the Jangalban area wastewater system, and the wastewater treatment facilities for Emamzadeh Davoud village," IRIB reported.

During the opening ceremony Aliabadi said, "Over the past 30 years, we had 400 billion cubic meters of water resources, but this figure has now decreased to 300 billion cubic meters."

The energy minister elaborated, "For cities like Tehran, there aren't many solutions to address water stress. Some countries possess 18 times more water per capita than ours, but Iran's climate isn't among water-rich regions, necessitating a shift toward consumption management."

Regarding high-consumption subscribers, he stated, "The treatment cost per cubic meter of potable water is 300,000 tomans (≈\$3.40



USD). However, some individuals consume water indiscriminately under the assumption they've paid for it. Consequently, we must move toward rewarding efficient consumers and penalizing wasteful ones, as they infringe upon others' rights."

Emphasizing wastewater treatment necessity, Aliabadi added, "Not a single drop should be wasted without recycling, and this treated effluent is primarily used in industrial and agricultural sectors."

"We must adapt to current conditions and modify consumption pat-

terns, as we've endured drought for over five years. For instance, if trends persist, we may face difficulties extracting water from the Layan Dam within a month."

**Only 14% of dam water reservoir filled**

Meanwhile, Behzad Parsa, managing director of Tehran Regional Water Company, reported, "Since the start of the current water year, 153 millimeters of rainfall have been recorded in this province. Presently, only 14% of Tehran's dam reservoir capacity is filled."

According to the official, "This

marks the fifth consecutive year of low precipitation in Tehran Province, with this year's rainfall being unprecedented over the past 60 years. The recorded 153mm rainfall shows a 44% decrease compared to the long-term average and a 33% decline relative to last year."

**Worst water year in 60 years**

Highlighting the drought severity, he stressed, "Persistent drought over these five years has drastically reduced surface and groundwater levels, placing us in an extremely critical water situation. Based on conducted studies and official statistics spanning 60 years, this is the worst water year due to absence of effective precipitation."

"Even during spring – typically a favorable season for precipitation where snowmelt could generate runoff and floods to replenish reservoirs – we experienced insufficient rainfall. This past April saw 91% less precipitation compared to the long-term average," Parsa added.

"Collectively, these factors have reduced the effective volume of Tehran's drinking water reservoirs to 14%," the managing director concluded.

## Exports to Africa soar 85%, trade balance up 113%: TPO



**Economy Desk**

A senior official at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) cited an 85% growth in Iran's exports to African countries during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2025) compared to the same period last year, while also announcing a 113% increase in Iran's trade balance with African nations.

Announcing the above, Acting Director of the Africa Office Mohammadreza Safari added the country must move towards "exporting high value-added finished products and investing in offshore production within African countries," ISNA reported.

Referring to Iran's trade statistics with African countries during this year's first quarter, Safari elaborated, "Exports to Africa experienced 85% growth during this period compared to the same timeframe last year. Concurrently, alongside this export growth, we witnessed a reduction in imports, resulting in a 113% growth in the trade balance."

According to this official at the TPO, the number of Iran's target export countries on the African continent has increased from 27 to 32 countries.

Analyzing the reasons behind the growth in Iran's foreign trade with African countries, Safari commented, "One reason for the export increase to African countries appears to be the Iran-Africa Economic Cooperation Summit. Operationalizing the resolutions of the Africa Headquarters could accelerate this trend."

Concluding his remarks, the acting director of the Africa office proposed, "Given recent developments – including rising energy and transportation costs, reduced financial support, and new US tariffs on these countries' exports – Iran's trade strategy with Africa should shift towards exporting high value-added finished products and investing in offshore production in African countries. This is a strategy that countries like China have pursued in Africa for years."

## China’s June crude imports jump as Iranian, Saudi volumes surge

China's crude oil imports surged to 12.14 million barrels per day in June, marking a 7.4% year-on-year increase, driven by a sharp rise in deliveries from Saudi Arabia and Iran, Reuters reported on Monday.

The spike reflects both restocking after refinery maintenance and opportunistic buying by independent refiners amid steep discounts on sanctioned

barrels.

According to China's General Administration of Customs, cited by Reuters, total imports reached 49.89 million tons in June, the highest monthly volume since March. Analysts at Oilchem and Kpler cited refinery restarts and attractive Persian Gulf pricing as key drivers, particularly for China's "teapot" refineries in Shandong,

oilprice.com reported.

Saudi crude shipments to China rose by 845,000 barrels per day to 1.78 million bpd. Iranian imports also climbed, with traders estimating a 445,000-bpd increase, despite ongoing US sanctions. Many of these flows were channeled through independent refiners taking advantage of discounts of \$2 to \$3.50 per barrel below Brent.





# Redesigning free zones for digital economy



By Kamal Ebrahimi Kavari  
Expert in free trade zones, scholar

## OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In the rapidly evolving landscape of global trade, the traditional model of free trade zones (FTZs) is being challenged by seismic shifts in technology, sustainability, and geopolitical realignment.

Once primarily defined by tax incentives and light regulation, today's free zones are being reimagined as digitally enabled, innovation-driven ecosystems that integrate seamlessly into global value chains. The digital economy is no longer a peripheral factor — it is the central axis around which modern free zones must now pivot.

The rise of e-commerce, artificial intelligence, blockchain, cloud logistics, and real-time data analytics has fundamentally altered the expectations

of investors, traders, and logistics providers. These actors increasingly demand intelligent infrastructure, automated customs clearance, integrated digital platforms, and cyber-resilient ecosystems. In this context, free zones must transform themselves from passive enclaves of low-cost production into proactive facilitators of smart trade.

Some global examples underscore this trend. In the UAE, the Dubai Commerce City free zone has positioned itself as the region's first e-commerce-focused zone, equipped with end-to-end digital infrastructure. In China, the digital transformation of free zones in Shenzhen and Hainan integrates AI, fintech, and blockchain services directly into customs and regulatory procedures. Meanwhile, Singapore continues to lead in integrating free zones into its broader digital economy strategy, connecting logistics hubs with global data infrastructure.

Redesigning FTZs for the digital age, however, requires more than technological upgrades. It demands a complete paradigm shift in policy, governance, and capacity building. Governments must move toward regulatory sandboxes that support experimentation, enable digital licensing, and accommodate digital assets and fintech innovations. The legal frameworks governing free zones should adapt to issues such as data sovereignty, cross-border digital taxation, and cybersecurity compliance.

Furthermore, the development of a skilled, digital-ready workforce within FTZs is imperative. Building partnerships between free zone authorities, universities, and private sector actors will be crucial in developing specialized talent pools for data analytics, cloud logistics, software engineering, and smart manufacturing. A failure to address the human capital dimension will likely undermine even the most

advanced infrastructure investments. Environmental sustainability must also be integrated into this redesign. The next generation of free zones will need to balance digital innovation with green transition goals — adopting energy-efficient technologies, implementing circular economy principles, and aligning with ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) standards to remain competitive in an increasingly regulated global market.

In conclusion, the digital economy does not merely offer opportunities for free zones — it presents a survival imperative. Those zones that embrace digital transformation proactively will emerge as hubs of resilience, innovation, and investment in the coming decade. Those that remain rooted in outdated paradigms risk becoming economically irrelevant. Redesigning free zones for the digital era is not just a strategy; It is the new baseline for global competitiveness.



Redesigning FTZs for the digital age, however, requires more than technological upgrades. It demands a complete paradigm shift in policy, governance, and capacity building.

## Steering country through crisis

# Gov't manages war under commander-in-chief's leadership

## INTERVIEW

Mohammad Reza Aref, the first vice president of Iran, in an interview, first looked into the government's role in handling the 12-day war, and then spelled out the Islamic Republic of Iran's position regarding the remarks of the US president. He also shed light on the leadership of the Commander-in-Chief Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, in guiding the country and the armed forces, and offered an account of his historic presence on the eve of Ashura at the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh.

To kick off the discussion, please break down the government's role in managing the society and maintaining its composure during the 12-day imposed war, especially considering that not only did essential goods and administrative services for the people keep going, but extraordinary efforts across the executive branch kept things on track.

**AREF:** From day one, the Pezeshkian government was thrown into war; A dear guest of our country was assassinated, and the message of this assassination was the continuation of this path by the Zionist regime and its backers. So,

in October 2024, we came to the conclusion that we had to factor in a wartime mindset in managing the country. The strategy drawn up was to keep a lid on public anxiety so that people wouldn't feel the country was at war, but for government officials, it was wartime management. That's why we put together a wartime administration plan, especially for economic affairs. Of course, this plan was limited in scope and wasn't made public. We consulted with higher authorities and mapped out two scenarios: first, exporting 500,000 barrels of oil a day, and second, exporting zero barrels.

In any case, the government was prepared. The strategies laid out included the need to delegate authority in the event of a crisis; In other words, to put into practice command and control (C4I). That's why, just hours after the incident, the government called an emergency meeting and handed over authority: Governors were given full powers in their provinces under Article 127, and ministers were granted the powers inherent to their positions under Article 138. Thus, government authority was divided among four working groups: economic, infrastructure, security, and information.

Each, under Article 138, had the government's full backing. So, with a solid mechanism, activities got underway. The Market Regulation Headquarters also hit the ground running from the start of the government. While we were pushing ahead with price liberalization under the law — except for a few items — special decisions had to be made in wartime. Fortunately, thanks to our foresight, the country's strategic reserves were built up to a very strong position. Our reserves were so robust that, during the Zionist regime's assault, we didn't even need to dip into our strategic goods.

So, our economy was fully prepared, and the people, especially with the Leader's televised messages, rose to the occasion. Except for gasoline, there were no other queues — which was natural, given the sudden spike in demand that our number of gas stations couldn't keep up with. Even in the gasoline lines, people showed unity and cooperation; So, not a single issue cropped up. Our daily gasoline production was 110 million liters, and with the expansion over the past seven or eight months, it climbed to around 120 million liters. Still, on the first day of the war, consumption hit 197 million liters.



In less than 10 hours, the highest-ranking military officials were appointed — a remarkable feat. I often tell my colleagues: Appointing the head of a small department with 15 staff can drag on for a month, and even then, the new chief may ask for a week to get started



The reality is, the people’s behavior regarding consumer goods was exemplary — truly outstanding. Chain store sales average 1.4 to 1.45 trillion tomans (\$16.2 million) per day; On the first day of the war, this jumped to 1.9 trillion (\$21.3 million) — a nearly 40% increase. On the second day, sales dropped below the average, and in the following days, returned to normal growth; In other words, people only bought what they needed. There may have been exceptions, but overall, people played their part. That’s why store shelves, which were full, stayed full. Bear in mind, the Zionist regime had talked up a three-day plan: Day one, by targeting commanders and key forces, they would score a military win; Day two, in their wildest dreams, the people would rally behind them; And day three, in negotiations scheduled for Sunday, “surrender” would be agreed upon. But the people, under the Leader’s guidance, stepped forward and truly stuck to what they knew was right — balance in consumption, helping each other,



Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (L) talks with President Masoud Pezeshkian during a cabinet meeting in Tehran, Iran, on June 15, 2025, two days after Israel launched its war of aggression against the country. ● [president.ir](#)

and the spread of voluntary services; Even in the gasoline lines, we saw a man with his young daughter handing out drinks. Under these circumstances, production outstripped our needs; Some producers even ran second and third shifts. Also worth mentioning is the valuable move by the Chamber of Guilds, as guilds stepped up — many sold at cost, and some companies even slashed their prices. This was a significant gesture. Our main worry was about goods in ports and on ships. Here, too, a truly heroic effort took shape, with truck drivers leading the charge — truckers who, just a month earlier, had been protesting and making demands — some of which had been met, some still under review. Suddenly, when this war broke out, truckers threw their weight behind the effort. As a result, cargo unloading from ports doubled compared to normal times; In other words, our strategy paid off. In other areas, too, we saw the people’s remarkable cooperation, and thankfully, the country was well managed economically. Thanks to the delegation of authorities, managers made decisions on the spot. Now, we’ve reached a good conclusion and have asked all agencies to hand in their accounts of

the 12-day imposed war. Since we’re now in a “cessation of aggression” situation, we must stay on our toes to be able to hit back harder if needed. In these reports, sections are to analyze shortcomings so that if there were any lapses or shortages, we can iron out the kinks within the government, God willing, and, using legal mechanisms, get better prepared. Fortunately, the dynamism in the executive bodies during this period was truly remarkable. Besides the government, which held a meeting on the first day, almost all key ministries sent me their decision-making minutes by Saturday morning; Everyone knew where they stood by noon. Thanks to the Leader’s decisive action in appointing commanders — since top military commanders had been martyred, and normally leadership changes take time — within a few hours, the situation was stabilized, so that our first operation was carried out just hours later.

**As you mentioned, we are now in a “cessation of aggression” situation, and our counterparts are Netanyahu**

**and Trump, who may well go back on their commitments. In recent days, the US president has ramped up both direct and indirect psychological warfare against public opinion, doubling down on his previous talk of “unconditional surrender” for Iran, insisting that the Iranians must now come to the negotiating table and accept what they dictate. As the first vice president of Iran, what is your take on the US president’s remarks?**

Look, the word “surrender” doesn’t hold any water in our political and defense culture. We are a civilized nation with a proud, millennia-old heritage; We are not warmongers and did not set off this conflict. We believe in peace and dialogue, but we will never give in. As has been stated many times, including by the Leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution, “We do not start wars, but if a war breaks out, we end it.” That is exactly the case now. Our adversary, the Zionist regime, cannot be trusted. We did not grant them a cease-fire. In Lebanon, there was a cease-fire, yet you see that most of the casualties came after it. Their approach to Iran is the same: If the regime senses it has the upper hand in any area, it will certainly make a move. Therefore, to prevent this or to ensure they get a harsher blow, we must hold on to our advantage. That’s why, in this short time, working groups have been set up and we have kicked off strategic initiatives. It’s clear that in some areas we’ve fallen short or need to step up our game; So, we hope that, in a short time, some of the shortcomings and gaps we’ve faced

on those areas will be sorted out, so that we can keep our edge not only in missile operations, but in other areas as well, God willing. In war, you often hear empty rhetoric; You’ve seen that their posturing, especially from Trump, can change tunes several times a day. That’s not our style; We have a stable, well-defined strategy, and our actions are always grounded in national interests and the three pillars that have long guided our foreign policy — dignity, wisdom, and expediency. So, if we give our word, we don’t back out; If we make a statement, we stand by it — and everything we say is based on strategy and the chain of command. That’s why we have confidence in ourselves, and I believe the world’s assessment is that Iran’s positions are clear, stable, and unchangeable. Our intention is to stay the course and, God willing, continue to act accordingly.

**You touched on the post-war period and reconstruction. Where do we stand on that?**

This is a very important topic. Even before the cessation of aggression kicked in, we had already gotten the ball rolling. Our assessment was that this phase would be wrapped up one way or another, but we must anticipate a much bigger stage ahead. We have launched some promising initiatives, though I won’t go into details now, but I assure the people that we are even better prepared than we were during the 12-day war. Our strategy is to maintain our advantage in a short timeframe, and the social cohesion and capital that have been built up must be preserved. A working group has been put together to focus on this. For weaknesses in goods, ports, or other issues, other groups are working on it. God willing, at the earliest opportunity — which shouldn’t be far off — we’ll be able to report back to our good people with a comprehensive update.

**How do you assess the role of the Leader in managing the country, particularly his command during the 12-day war?**



A man shows a victory sign as he buys groceries during Israel’s war of aggression against Iran, on June 19, 2025. ● [AMIR KHOLOUSI/ISNA](#)

If we take a quick look back, the general policies in various sectors are crystal clear, including the Leader’s deep insight, foresight, and the transparent positions he lays out in every area. Truly, it is this vision and leadership that, despite all the hostility, have overcome all the



Leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (C) attends a mourning ceremony on the eve of Ashura at the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh in Tehran, Iran, on July 5, 2025. ● [khamenei.ir](#)

challenges we’ve faced since the Revolution, and sanctions that the West claims are crippling, moving us forward. If I were to highlight the Leader’s specific focus, it is on the development of science and technology. If you look through his statements over the years, you’ll see this is where he places the greatest emphasis. He has steered the country’s behavior and actions toward science-based development. Fortunately, this perspective has taken firm root in the defense sector under his strategies. The achievements in our defense sector are all thanks to our young, homegrown scientists. This outlook has now put our defensive capabilities in the region in a top position. Compare the early days of the imposed war in 1980 with now — it’s night and day. This is the result of his vision. He applies this same outlook to field management; From his position as the commander-in-chief, we see the same approach. In managing this war, if you look at his recent televised addresses, his main

focus has been on uniting the people and getting them to step up, then on encouraging the fighters to act bravely within the law. And we’ve seen the results: In less than 10 hours, the highest-ranking military officials were appointed — a remarkable feat. I often tell my colleagues: Appointing the head of a small department with 15 staff can drag on for a month, and even then, the new chief may ask for a week to get started; But in this case, within 10 hours, commanders on par with the martyred leaders

were appointed and carried out successful operations within hours. This is the hallmark of the commander-in-chief’s leadership. And it’s not just those of us who have worked with him for 40 or 50 years who say this — even our adversaries acknowledge his courage and command.

**When the Leader came to the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh on the eve of Ashura, you were present; could you share your account of that event?**

His presence at that ceremony was truly exceptional. I don’t think anyone in the Hosseiniyeh expected him to come. Even we assumed that if he didn’t show up, it would be due to pressing work. Let me share an anecdote: During the Bam earthquake, we accompanied him on that famous 707 flight. When he was supposed to return, a severe storm hit, and his office told us the flight would be pushed back — We weren’t allowed to fly that night. After an hour, it turned out that the Leader, despite the storm, had flown back, but didn’t allow us to join him — we had to leave the next morning. That shows his courage in tough conditions. So, with all the nonsense and empty talk the enemies have spouted — and will continue to spout — they’ve only exposed themselves each time. They claimed he wouldn’t show up for various reasons, but he did. The crowd at the Hosseiniyeh, caught off guard, broke out in spontaneous chants. As I witnessed, their reaction was instinctive — everyone was stunned for a few minutes, and the atmosphere was deeply spiritual and moving. After a few minutes of reflection, I thought it was natural; The Leader surely came that night, so no one could claim he was afraid to attend because of the attacks. I personally sensed a few things: His personal qualities — authority and courage combined with prudence — his spiritual leadership among Muslims and Iranians — seeing a religious leader is itself a blessing in our view — and, third, the high-level leadership he showed during the war. His presence changed the mood of the country; The energy and vitality doubled, and we still feel its effects: That yes, this is who we are, we fear nothing but God, and we step into the fray with courage — just as the Leader’s actions and our people’s admirable response have shown.

*The article first appeared in Persian on [khamenei.ir](#).*



From day one, the Pezeshkian government was thrown into war; A dear guest of our country was assassinated, and the message of this assassination was the continuation of this path by the Zionist regime and its backers. So, in October 2024, we came to the conclusion that we had to factor in a wartime mindset in managing the country. The strategy drawn up was to keep a lid on public anxiety so that people wouldn’t feel the country was at war, but for government officials, it was wartime management.



## FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B:

## Iran hammers Mongolia to stay top of group

## Sports Desk

Irani claimed a second emphatic win in their FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B campaign, routing Mongolia 89-55 in Shenzhen, China, on Tuesday.

Both teams entered the contest on the back of first-day victories, but it was Iran's three-point shooting and defensive intensity that ultimately made the difference.

Iranian girls hit six triples in the first eight minutes to erect a 25-6 lead that they never relinquished. Mongolia battled valiantly, but Iran's Roxanna Barahman and Negin Rasoulipour controlled the tempo for much of the game to secure the win.

Having demolished the Cook Islands 82-32 in their opening game, Iran stayed atop the Group B table in the eight-team tournament, remaining on course for a maiden progress to the top division.

Rasoulipour led Iran with 20 points, including four three-pointers, while Barahman added 15.

Nahideh Asadi also finished in double figures for Iran, dropping 10, with Khulan Onolbaatar and Tsatsral Bayarmaa top-scoring for Mongolia with 10 points apiece.

Iran will take on Thailand, which was beaten 81-74 by Mongolia on Monday, today at the Shenzhen Sports Center.

Greek coach Eleni Kapogianni's side had defeated Syria (65-55) and Jordan (88-70) in April's qualifiers in Amman to book a place in the eight-team Division B finals.

The winner of the competition will be part of the qualification for next edition of the Asia Cup, Division A.

The Chinese Taipei and Kazakhstan are two former Div. A sides in Group A, also featuring Tahiti and India.



Iranian girls celebrate their victory over Mongolia at the FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B in Shenzhen, China, on July 15, 2025.



● FIBA

## Portuguese Jesus takes charge of Al Nassr



● REUTERS

AFC – Jorge Jesus has been appointed head coach of Saudi Arabia side Al Nassr Club, taking over the reins from Stefano Pioli.

The Portuguese tactician was previously with Al Nassr's Saudi Pro League rivals Al Hilal SFC for two seasons in what was his second stint with the Riyadh-based club. At Al Nassr, Jesus will be working with Portuguese icon Cristiano Ronaldo, who recently extended his contract until 2027.

Besides their domestic commitments, Al Nassr will also compete

in the AFC Champions League Two™ 2025/26.

Jesus parted ways with Al Hilal following their AFC Champions League Elite™ 2024/25 semi-final exit but did enjoy success with the four-time Asian champions, guiding the club to a treble in the 2023/24 season where Al Hilal won the Saudi Pro League, King's Cup and Saudi Super Cup.

The 70-year-old had previously coached Benfica and Sporting CP in Portugal as well as Flamengo in Brazil.

## Volleyball Nations League:

## Iran to begin decisive Week 3 with Polish test

## Sports Desk

Iran will kick off a decisive third week of action at the Volleyball Nations League today when taking on Poland in Gdansk.

Iran is 10th in the 18-team table of the preliminary phase with a 4-4 record, while the European powerhouse is second to Brazil, thanks to six wins in eighth outings.

The top seven of the preliminaries will join host China at the VNL Finals – starting with the quarterfinals in Ningbo on July 30.

Olshzyn on Saturday, with the home side coming out victorious in straight sets (26-24, 25-20, 25-21) before Iran won an addi-

tional fourth set 25-20.

The good news for Iran head coach Roberto Piazza is the return of Morteza Sharifi for team selection, after the prolific outside-hitter, who has chipped in 67 points in the preliminaries, missed the final two games of the second week against Germany and the Netherlands with an ankle injury.

A second game in Week 3 for Iran will come against China on Thursday, followed by an encounter against Olympic champion France on Saturday. Iran will hope to be in contention for a top-seven finish in the table and a place in the VNL Finals when squaring off against Bulgaria in the final round of the preliminaries on Sunday.

"We'll have to prepare differently for each game, as our first game against Poland will be played at 8:00 p.m. and the second one will come at 4:30 p.m. the following day – leaving us with little recovery time between the two games.

"So, we'll need to completely reset our mindset. We'll have one day to rest, then play again at 8:30 p.m. against France before the final match at 5:00 p.m. against Bulgaria the next day.

"Overall, we have a tough week ahead. We know exactly what we want. Our fate is in our hands – if we want it, we can achieve it. But we need to take it day by day, not think about the whole week at once. So,

our first challenge is the match against Poland," Piazza said. Looking to progress to the Finals for the first time since 2022, Iran got off to a slow start in the competition under the new Italian coach, suffering successive defeats against Brazil (3-0), USA (3-2), and Slovenia (3-2), before salvaging a five-set win against Ukraine in the final Week 1 game in Rio de Janeiro. The Asian powerhouse, however, delivered much-improved displays in the second week of action, defeating Serbia in four sets in Belgrade, before claiming victories against Argentina (3-1) and the Netherlands (3-2) either side of a 3-1 loss to Germany.



● volleyball.ir



# Dehloran’s landmarks, natural heritage sites attract tourists



Bat Cave  
● razebaghaa.ir



Hot springs  
● fartaknews.com



Tar spring  
● kojaro.com

### Iranica Desk

The natural history of Dehloran in Ilam Province contains a collection of remarkable artifacts that are very ancient and rare, attracting many tourists, a prehistorical archaeologist said. Habibollah Mahmoudian told ISNA that Dehloran is located in the southeastern part of the province, 228 kilometers from the provincial capital city of Ilam. It borders Abadan to the north, Andimeshk in Khuzestan Province to the east, Khuzestan Province and parts of Iraq to the south, and the eastern regions of Iraq to the west. It has an area of 6,816 square kilometers.

The city comprises four districts — Sarab-e Meymeh, Zarrinabad, Markazi, and Mousian — and eight rural districts. The remains of historical and archaeological artifacts and collection of ancient objects discovered there indicate the area’s antiquity across different historical periods.

### Climate and natural environment

Dehloran features a semi-arid climate with hot summers and mild winters. During the summer months, temperatures can rise significantly, often exceeding 40°C, making it one of the hotter regions in the province. Winters are relatively mild, with

temperatures sometimes dropping below freezing at night but remaining moderate during the day. The region’s climate creates a unique environment that influences its flora and fauna, with drought-resistant plants and species adapted to harsh conditions. The surrounding landscape is characterized by rocky hills, plains, and mountain slopes, including the prominent Siahkuh Mountain. The natural environment is rich in mineral springs, caves, and other geological formations, making it an area of great interest for nature lovers and researchers alike. The region’s dry climate and rugged terrain have historically shaped its

human settlements and archaeological significance.

### Bat Cave

Mahmoudian said Bat (Kho-fash) Cave is located three kilometers northeast of Dehloran, on the slopes overlooking the valley and the famous hot spring of Dehloran. It measures 255 meters in length, 30 meters in width, and 50 meters in height. Due to the presence of millions of bats, it is known as the Bat Cave. The bats in this cave differ from those in other caves because these bats have tails. The Bat Cave of Dehloran contains numerous stalactites and stalagmites, which indicate geological and tectonic transforma-

tions over time.

### Hot springs

This archaeologist stated that Dehloran’s hot springs are among the natural phenomena of Dehloran. They are situated in the northeastern part of the city, on the slopes of Siahkuh near the Bat Cave. Due to their significance, they are registered as a national natural site. Like other mineral springs, these hot springs have therapeutic properties and antifungal effects. Scientific investigations show that Dehloran’s hot springs are fossil springs created by geological activities and energy sources in the region. Mahmoudian added that

the hot springs, whose main source of emergence is underground, are among the rarest natural phenomena in the province and the country. They provide warm, sulfur-rich water to visitors for healing and treatment of various diseases. With a temperature of about 50°C, these hot springs are hygienic and equipped with mud pools, making them highly significant for therapeutic purposes.

### Tar springs

The tar springs of Dehloran are among Iran’s natural phenomena in this region. They are situated northeast of the city, on the slopes of Siahkuh. Mahmoudian ex-

plained, “The tar springs, along with water, surge from the ground and form a natural black basin at the source, flowing along a short course. This natural site has been registered on the National List of Natural Heritage Sites. In ancient times, the natural tar from this area was used for waterproofing rooftops.” Historical sources mention a city in the region where the rooftops of the houses were coated with tar. The remains of ancient cities in the Dehloran and Mousian areas, including the prehistoric mounds of Mousian, due to their proximity to the tar spring, may potentially be remnants of the same city.

## Haj Aqa Ali House; icon of traditional Iranian architecture

At a distance of six kilometers from Rafsanjan in Kerman Province, there exist remarkable brick houses that are not only among the largest in the world but also stand out for their exquisite beauty. One such magnificent structure is the Haj Aqa Ali House, also known as Zaeemullah Rafsanjani. Covering an area of 12,000 square meters, this historic residence comprises 86 rooms, which have been organized into four main sections: the pool house, the royal wing, and the autumn and winter chambers.

### History

Haj Agha Ali was one of the most prominent merchants of his era, and he constructed this impressive house in 1937. The complex is celebrated as one of the finest examples of Qajar architecture, showcasing refined craftsmanship and architectural principles. Notably, the house reflects traditional Iranian architectural techniques, thoughtfully adapted to meet the climatic and regional conditions of its environment. Built in a region characterized by intense heat and arid conditions, the house features very high walls to prevent sand from blowing inside, and its entrance gate is both grand

and imposing, underscoring its significance.

### Who was Haj Aqa Ali?

Haj Aqa Ali was a renowned merchant and influential figure in Rafsanjan during the Qajar period. He was later known honorifically as Amin al-Tojjar, meaning “Trustee of Merchants,” and his children carried the surname Aminian. His trading activities spanned across countries such as China and India, and among the local people of Rafsanjan and Kerman, it was common to find porcelain bowls and plates inscribed with the number 110, representing the Abjad numerals for Ali, persioplanet.com wrote. Despite amassing significant wealth — owning herds of thousands of sheep and extensive farms — Haj Aqa Ali lived a life



● visitiran.ir

marked by simplicity and philanthropy. He was a generous benefactor who funded numerous public works, including bazaars, mosques, caravanserais, water reservoirs, baths, and Hosseiniyehs in both

Kerman and Rafsanjan. There are various local stories and legends about his life. Some recount that he was a man of humble beginnings who rose to wealth through remarkable transformation, while others

believe he accumulated his fortune through diligent effort and enterprise.

### Architecture

The Haj Agha Ali House, once referred to as the “Waqf House,” is recognized

as one of the largest covered brick buildings in the world. It was constructed in 1937 by architects from Yazd and Rafsanjan. The house rests on a foundation covering 4,000 square meters and was built on a plot of land totaling 8,000 square meters. The construction process took approximately 14 years to complete. The complex consists of four main sections: Royal, autumn, winter, and basin areas. It includes a total of 110 rooms, arranged across entrances with three, five, or seven doors, as well as various closets. The boundary around the house is secured by high walls that reach 10 meters in height. The Haj Aqa Ali House functions as a mansion designed for all four seasons, with specialized sections tailored for different times of the year. Below are descriptions of some of its most significant parts:

**Royal or spring porch:** Located in the southern part of the house, this porch is one of the most distinctive areas of the mansion. Adorned with exquisite decorations and plasterwork, it was reserved exclusively for formal gatherings and business affairs. Its aesthetic appeal and detailed craftsmanship highlight its importance.

**Howzkhaneh (pool house):** This is a large, two-story hall crowned with a sizable dome. It is the largest covered space within the house. On the second floor, there are two halls positioned to the north and south, along with several rooms. The central feature is a rectangular basin, historically connected via aqueducts to basins in the adjacent yards, providing a continuous water supply. The interior of the pool house’s hall is beautifully plastered and decorated with Islamic embossed designs, enhancing its elegant atmosphere.

**Autumn and winter halls:** Situated in the western and northern parts of the complex, these halls are more modest and less elaborately decorated than the royal and pool house sections. They were intended to serve as comfortable spaces during colder months.

**Kolah Farangi Mansion:** This section was primarily used during summer. On hot days, warm air enters through seven doors and interacts with nearby water fountains, creating a refreshing breeze that cools the entire building. The Kolah Farangi Mansion is also renowned for its beautiful and intricate mosaic or decorative tilework, adding to the mansion’s stunning visual appeal.







# Iran's minister hails eco-lodges as backbone of rural tourism revival

## Social Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, on Tuesday, July 59, praised eco-lodges as the "true carriers" of indigenous culture and a strategic pillar in the government's grassroots development agenda. Speaking at a meeting with heads of provincial eco-tourism associations in Tehran, Salehi Amiri underlined the critical role of eco-lodges in reviving local traditions, halting rural decline, and boosting domestic tourism. "These are not just places to sleep," he said, "they breathe life into languages, customs, and culinary heritage that hotels simply cannot replicate." The event brought together senior ministry officials and provincial representatives to discuss fiscal, legal, and infrastructural hurdles facing Iran's 3,744 registered eco-lodges. Salehi Amiri emphasized that these establishments stand at the heart of the government's strategy to decentralize tourism and empower rural communities. The minister described them as "symbols of people-centered governance" and "ve-

hicles for cultural identity." Amiri also highlighted the "inspiring" role eco-lodge operators played during the recent 56-day conflict, particularly in Kerman province, where free accommodation was offered to displaced civilians. "This showed that eco-lodges are more than businesses — they are part of our national social fabric," he noted. The minister stressed that rural festivals, focused on local food, dress, and rituals, are catalysts for drawing visitors and bringing income back to underdeveloped areas. "When jobs are born in villages, they are sustainable and rooted," he said. According to Salehi Amiri, reversing rural migration and sparking "life back in forgotten corners" is no longer a dream. "Eco-tourism is not a tool," he declared, "it is the goal." On regulatory matters, Salehi Amiri warned that while the government remains firmly behind licensed operators, unregistered facilities would face legal action to preserve industry standards. He added that a push for renewable energy was underway, with solar panels being rolled out at eco-lodges in several provinces. "The President has thrown his



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri (c), speaks at a meeting with heads of provincial eco-tourism associations in Tehran on July 15, 2025.  
● IRNA

support behind this clean energy initiative. \$6bn has been earmarked to make it happen." During the same event, Deputy Minister of Tourism Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey described eco-lodges as a "vast accommodation network" that actively shapes cultural values. He said their response during the conflict "was nothing short of remarkable," showing both social responsibility and national solidarity. Elsewhere in the discussion, ministry advisers and provincial representatives raised concerns over taxation, bank credit access, and outdated regulations. Salehi Amiri tasked the tourism division with fast-tracking solutions, instructing them to "clear the roadblocks without delay." Yavar Abiri, head of the national Eco-lodges Association, underlined their



economic potential. "They help curb migration, reduce poverty, and create jobs," he said, calling for continued financial backing. "We're not just keeping up — we're competitive with global standards," he added. Salehi Amiri, who also chaired a separate

economic coordination session on Monday, revealed that 54 stimulus packages have been designed to help the tourism sector bounce back after the war. "Tourism was hit hard, but it's also the first to bounce back. The road ahead is clear, and we're committed."

## Iranian drama 'They Loved Me' to compete at Portugal Avanca festival



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian director Mohammadreza Rahmani's feature 'They Loved Me' was officially selected for competition at the 69th Avanca International Film Festival,

to be held from July 63 to 67 in the northern Portuguese town of Avanca. This is the film's international debut. The Avanca festival, launched in 1997, is one of Portugal's most prominent showcases for inde-

pendent cinema and media arts. In addition to screenings, it hosts technical workshops and masterclasses led by veteran filmmakers and educators from around the world, IRNA reported. 'They Loved Me' stars Amirhossein Arman, Amir Jafari, Mahsa Esmaeili, Nasim Adabi, Shahram Qaedi, Hadi Taslimi, Seyed Ali Salehi, Iraj Rahmani, and Leila Boloukat. The drama, which had faced a period of suspension by Iranian authorities, finally opened in domestic cinemas in autumn 6464. International distribution is handled by Elaheh Goodarzi of Minerva Film Institute. Rahmani's film joins a competitive lineup at Avanca that frequently features bold storytelling from emerging voices. Festival organizers said this year's selection "bridges borders and genres," with a strong focus on films rooted in social realities.

## Tehran to host war memorial art show

## Arts & Culture Desk

A group exhibition titled 'Tehran,' honoring those who died in the recent war, will open on Friday, July 58, at Artibition Gallery in Tehran. The month-long exhibit is a joint effort by several galleries and features works from eight contemporary Iranian artists, aiming to portray the capital as both a battlefield and a place of belonging. The event reflects on the emotional toll of war, forced displacements, and the struggle of a city caught "between attachment and chaos." The participating artists include Arman Yaghoubipour, Kiumars Harpa, Marjan Nemati, Mohammad Eskandari, Fatemeh Zanjani, Behrouz Majidi, Amin Tavakol, and Fateck Mousavi. The poster was designed by Alireza Shafiee, ISNA reported. "Tehran stands somewhere in the twilight of its residents' identity," the exhibition's curatorial statement reads. The city is described as both a "capital for migrants" and a birthplace for generations who have lived its every joy and trauma—pulled between



love for home and the exhausting realities of "crowds, noise, speed and smoke." Referencing Plato's Republic, the statement paints Tehran as distant from the philosopher's ideal of a "just city," yet still a cradle for memory, resistance, and resilience. "In the twelve gray days just past, Tehran emptied out under missile strikes. Some departures were permanent. Others, temporary and forced. But the city—scarred and watchful—remains." The show will run through August 56.

## Iran ranks 11th among Islamic countries in 2026 QS university list

## Social Desk

Iran ranked 55th among Islamic nations in the 6466 edition of the QS World University Rankings, according to figures released in July by the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC). The data shows that Malaysia led the list with 36 universities, followed by Indonesia and Turkey with 66 each. Iran had 55 institutions on the global ranking. The results, published in June 6469 by QS Quacquarelli Symonds, evaluated over 5,944 universities worldwide in its 66nd edition, ISNA reported. The top-ranked institution among Muslim-majority countries was Universiti Malaya (UM) of Malaysia, placed 98th globally. It was followed by King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) in Saudi Arabia, ranked 67th, and Qatar University at 556. "The Islamic world was represented by 694



universities from 69 countries," said Mohammad-Mehdi Alavianmehr, head of the ISC, adding that 97 Islamic nations were eligible. Globally, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) held on to the top spot for the 54th consecutive year, while Imperial College London climbed to second. Stanford, Oxford, and Harvard followed in third to fifth place respectively. The ISC is the Tehran-based institute that monitors and analyses science and technology developments across the Islamic world.



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