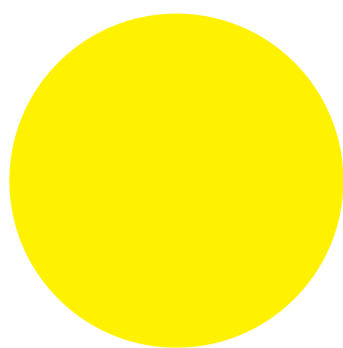


Iran, UN focusing
on desert greening,
combating dust storms

3 >



Iran Daily

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> irandaily.ir

newspaper.irandaily.ir

IranDailyWeb

Pezeshkian to Pashinyan: Iran confident in own peaceful nuclear program, never accepts coercion

2 >



President urges 'dignified' return of Afghan migrants amid repatriation

8 >



Europe prefers to extend snapback mechanism

By Heydarali Masoudi
International relations professor

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

In the new round of diplomacy, European trio—France, Germany and Britain—feel they have been edged aside. They believe they were the architects of the nuclear talks with Iran and drive behind the JCPOA, rooted in early 2000s multilateral and normative European diplomacy. Yet, with indirect Iran-US talks stalling or turning confrontational, European officials now believe that Iran might seek to rekindle direct diplomatic engagement with Europe rather than continue indirect interactions with the US. Meanwhile, rising competition between Europe and the US—particularly during Trump's second term—has pushed Europe to see international dossiers like Iran's nuclear case as bargaining tools to assert their diplomatic clout against the United States. This stems from two motives: first, a belief that negotiations without Europe produced unintended tensions and open conflict, creating a vacuum Europe is ready to fill; second, a broader transatlantic rivalry has encouraged Europe to carve out a fresh diplomatic role on the global stage.

Page 2 >

A look back at Zionism's history,
penetration strategy in Iran

Zionists pushed Iran infiltration since Nakba: Expert

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

4-5 >



Lut Desert's role in sustainable development, global dialogue

7 >

Hitler returns?

Germany's history of 'dirty work' instances

By Mohammad Saeid Irani
International affairs analyst

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

On June 17, during a televised interview, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz openly praised Israel's military assault on Iran. Far from condemning the aggression, he bluntly remarked, "This is the dirty work Israel is doing for all of us!" and expressed his "utmost respect" for Israel's "courage" in attacking Iran.



Friedrich Merz
REUTERS

These remarks raise serious questions about Germany's foreign policy — particularly its professed commitment to human rights, peace, and democracy. A closer look at Germany's modern history reveals a country with a long-standing record of what can only be described as "dirty work" — many far worse than what is currently veiled by diplomatic language and polished rhetoric.

By the late 19th century, Germany had become the third-largest colonial empire after Britain and France. During the brutal suppression of the anti-colonial Maji-Maji rebellion in present-day Tanzania (1905-1907), German forces massacred indigenous civilians. Historians estimate that between 75,000 and 300,000 people were killed. This genocide is now considered one of the first of the 20th century, laying the ideological groundwork for the racism and fascism that would follow. The world will never forget the atrocities of Nazi Germany. Under Hitler's fascist regime, the globe was plunged into World War II — a conflict that left over 70 million people dead. What is deeply alarming today are the echoes of that era in the current German chancellor's rhetoric, which starkly resembles the war-mongering and racially-charged language of Hitler. Can Friedrich Merz be rightfully dubbed the "new Hitler" in recognition of his attempt at cloaking militarism and ethnic aggression in the garb of democracy? Later, in the 1980s, German companies played a key role in providing Saddam Hussein's regime with the infrastructure to produce chemical weapons. These weapons were soon used against civilians — with the chemical massacres in Halabja and Sar-dasht standing as horrifying examples. Germany has never truly been held accountable for its complicity in these war crimes.

Page 2 >

Pezeshkian to Pashinyan: Iran confident in own peaceful nuclear program, never accepts coercion

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Saturday that Iran is confident in the peaceful nature of its nuclear activities, stressing that exerting pressure on Iran and depriving it of its legal rights "is absolutely unacceptable." In a phone call with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the Iranian president said Tehran is committed to international laws and, given its confidence in peaceful nature of its nuclear activities, has never had and does not have any concerns regarding monitoring and inspections by the UN atomic agency.

"However, we firmly stress that the use of coercion and pressure, as well as depriving our people of their legitimate rights, is in no way acceptable," Pezeshkian said.

Since April, Iran and the United States held five rounds of nuclear negotiations through Omani mediators before Israel launched its 12-day aggression against Iran on June 13. US President Donald Trump's decision to join Israel in striking Iranian nuclear facilities effectively ended the talks which were set to resume on June 15. The aggression against Iran claimed the lives of

more than 1,000 Iranians, most of them civilians.

Despite the aggression, both Tehran and Washington have signaled willingness to return to the table, though Tehran has said it will not give up its right to enrich uranium – a demand by the US for signing an agreement with Iran.

At the same time, the European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal – Britain, Germany and France – are threatening Iran with activating a snapback mechanism if no deal is reached with the US on Iran's nuclear program.

The so-called snapback mechanism allows for the return of anti-Iran sanctions suspended under the nuclear deal, from which the US withdrew in 2018 and its European parties failed to fulfill their commitments under the deal.

The deal expires in October and gives the parties to it a fast-looming deadline to invoke the clause.

US 'genuine will'

Meanwhile, the Iranian foreign minister said Tehran should see the United States' "genuine will" for resumption of nuclear talks, which ran into a snag following the US-Israeli aggression



Nikol Pashinyan

Masoud Pezeshkian

against Iran last month.

"If we are still not convinced, it is because we should see the other side's genuine will — a will to reach a win-win solution," Abbas Araghchi said in an interview with China's CGTN on the sidelines of a recent meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Tianjin.

"Our nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes, and we are certain about this. We have no problem with sharing this with others; however, this can only be achieved through negotiation," the Iranian foreign minister said. Araghchi said Iran proved the peaceful

nature of its nuclear program by signing an agreement with world powers in 2015, which was praised by the world praised as a "major diplomatic achievement."

But suddenly, Washington decided to pull out from the deal in a "regrettable decision," Araghchi said, adding that "everything we are witnessing today stems from that withdrawal."

Referring to a cease-fire proposed by the US to end conflict between Iran and Israel, Araghchi said that Iran's Armed Forces forced the aggressors to end their aggression and demand for a cease-fire. However, he said that

the cease-fire "remains fragile" due to the regime's "bad record" of breaking the cease-fire rules.

Iran's top diplomat underlined that the Islamic Republic is prepared to respond to any new aggression.

"We don't want this war to continue," he said. "But we are prepared for that." Iran's Armed Forces responded to the aggression by Israel and the US by targeting the regime's military facilities in the occupied territories and the US largest military site in West Asia in Qatar.

Following Iran's retaliation, the US proposed a cease-fire to end the conflict.

Tehran opposes any geopolitical changes in region: Security chief

International Desk

The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) expressed on Saturday the Islamic Republic's strong opposition to any geopolitical changes in the region. Ali Akbar Ahmadian made the assertion on the phone with his Armenian counterpart, Armen Grigoryan, saying Tehran believes that all regional nations benefit from this policy.

He also appreciated Armenia's stance in condemning the Israeli aggression against Iran during the 12-day imposed war.

During the phone conversation, the two sides discussed regional and bilateral issues.

The Armenian official presented a report on the latest status of negotiations with the Azerbaijani side, underscoring Yerevan's unchanged stance on regional transit corridors.

Grigoryan also emphasized Arme-



Ali Akbar Ahmadian

nia's position on the issue of unblocking regional channels, based on territorial integrity, sovereignty, and jurisdiction.

Ahmadian reaffirmed Iran's position on the matter and expressed support for Armenia's approach.

In May, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed on the text of a peace agreement to end nearly four decades of conflict between the South Cauca-

sus countries, with Yerevan agreeing to surrender its claim to Karabakh.

The long-disputed region of Karabakh was at the center of two costly wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 and the 1990s.

The region has always been internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, whose troops retook it in a 24-hour offensive.

Hitler returns? ...

Today, the Ramstein Air Base in Germany is the largest US military base outside America and serves as a central hub for NATO and US military operations in the Middle East. From drone strikes in Yemen and Pakistan to logistical support for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Ramstein has been implicated in countless acts of military violence against civilians. While peace activists and even members of the German Bundestag have criticized the base's role in atrocities, Germany has not only allowed its operation but actively facilitated it.

Germany's contradictory approach to terrorism further highlights the dissonance between its rhetoric and actions. Take the case of Jamshid Sharmahd, an Iranian-German accused of orchestrating terrorist attacks inside Iran. Despite being wanted for violent plots, he received political and legal support from Germany. Evidently, terrorism is tolerable when it serves Western political interests.

Germany also emerged as the second-largest arms supplier to Tel Aviv, after the United States, during Israel's repeated assaults on the Gaza Strip — especially in 2023. German-made weapons were reportedly used in attacks on schools, hospitals, refugee shelters, and even tents housing displaced civilians. In doing so, Germany once again found itself complicit in what many are call-

ing a modern-day genocide: the killing of around 60,000 Palestinians and the wholesale destruction of Gaza's civilian infrastructure.

Not only has Germany played a dirty role in the Gaza conflict, but it has also cracked down on domestic opposition to Israel's actions. Protests across German cities — often led by university students and civil society groups — were met with harsh police repression. Demonstrators carried placards reading, "You are complicit in genocide," "Boycott Israel," and "Germany is a fascist state." Hundreds were arrested, and the protests were violently dispersed. So, Germany has been a constant player in some of the gravest atrocities of modern history. Its foreign policy, particularly in supporting US and Israeli military operations, reveals a troubling inconsistency between its professed values and its real-world behavior.

The German Chancellor's recent remarks may well be seen as the latest "dirty deed" in a long line of morally questionable actions. In the German political lexicon, words like "peace" and "human rights" seem to function more as tools of Western political strategy than as genuine commitments. A country with a past steeped in colonialism, genocide, war, and repression and a present defined by arms sales, support for state violence, and suppression of dissent, has forfeited the moral authority to preach ethics to the world.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

Europe prefers to ...

Europeans are poised to initiate the snapback of sanctions by the end of

August, aiming to reinforce their status and influence in Iran's nuclear case and to secure their role as mediators and negotiating partners.

Activating the snapback mechanism does not strip Europe of its means to play a role in nuclear negotiations. On the contrary, it can be said that this move is part of the European strategy to maintain their position in the nuclear diplomacy process. From Iran's perspective, the legal interpretation of Europe's post-JCPOA conduct becomes paramount. Tehran might argue that, just as the United States ceased to be a JCPOA party after withdrawing in 2018, Europe—by failing to uphold its commitments—has effectively stepped out of the agreement, though not formally. If such reasoning prevails, Iran may no

longer consider Europe a legitimate partner in the JCPOA and could consequently challenge the legitimacy of their activation of the snapback mechanism.

Another interpretation suggests Iran may still consider the EU a JCPOA participant and view snapback as little more than a political bargaining chip, rather than a break in the agreement's framework. If that is the case, snapback could instead serve to boost Europe's leverage in nuclear diplomacy—especially if all parties seek a middle path neither involving full UNSC sanctions reinstatement nor the JCPOA's collapse under UNSCR 2231. Should Europe fail to act decisively, it will still lack leverage once the JCPOA deadline expires. Thus, the trio might provoke snapback to apply managed pressure on Iran while keeping channels of dialogue open. One proposal on the table calls for a one-year extension of the snapback timeframe—an opportunity to roll out fresh diplomacy, reopen talks, and keep the agreement or explore a revised deal.

Judging by Europe's August deadline for snapback activation, the objective appears less about reimposing Security Council sanctions and more about exerting political pressure to secure concessions from Tehran, and re-engage in nuclear negotiations from which Europe has largely receded in recent months.

If a realist lens is applied, Europe's preferred outcome is not escalating pressure but redefining its role in nuclear diplomacy. Extending the snapback within UNSCR 2231 could offer that vehicle. This suggests Europe has not abandoned its multilateral norms and diplomacy, but rather continues to pursue an active mediation role albeit while employing pressure tactics as part of this strategy.

Iran, UN focusing on desert greening, combating dust storms

Economy Desk

The head of Iran's Natural Resources and Watershed Management Organization emphasized the implementation of watershed management projects and reducing critical dust storm hotspots through cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Ali Teymouri, during a meeting on Saturday with Ayshanie Medagangoda-Labe, the officer-in-charge of the UNDP office in Iran, discussed joint cooperation priorities in natural resource management, combating desertification, and mitigating climate change impacts, as reported by IRNA.

The Iranian deputy minister highlighted Iran's climatic challenges as a country located in the world's arid and semi-arid belt and stressed the importance of international cooperation to preserve and restore natural resources. Referring to the 135 million hectares of natural resource areas under his organization's management and the existence of 32 million hectares of desert lands, Teymouri called



for UNDP collaboration in executing watershed management projects and reducing critical dust storm hotspots. He mentioned the national program to plant one billion saplings as a participatory initiative with the people, stating, "The organization is prepared to cooperate with the UNDP within the framework of our organization's goals and mandates."

UN works to counter sanctions on Iran environment

The UNDP officer-in-charge also outlined priority areas for UNDP cooperation with Iranian government institutions during the meeting. She proposed establishing micro-credit funds in provinces and local areas as an effective step towards expanding cooperation.

Highlighting the complexities involved in managing natural resources and the numerous variables at play, she emphasized the importance of utilizing local communities' capacities in implementing relevant projects. Medagangoda-Labe noted the decline in international financial resources for preserving natural resources and announced, "The UNDP office will strive to mitigate the impact of

sanctions on Iran's environment and secure Iran's financial allocation for climate change." She also reported consulting with financial funds to develop proposals in water management, drought, climate change, dust storms, and desertification. During the meeting, both sides emphasized expanding cooperation in watershed management and combating dust storms

through pilot and small-scale projects. They also called for continued dialogue to explore further areas of cooperation.

Government signs memoranda for extraterritorial cultivation: Minister



Economy Desk

The agriculture minister announced that the government had set a target of approximately one million hectares for extra-terri-

torial cultivation, stating that the ministry has signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) with several countries in this regard. Announcing the above, Gholamreza Nouri Ghezleji told ISNA that pre-

paratory work to commence overseas cultivation had begun. Nouri Ghezleji stated that the ministry has revised the regulations for overseas cultivation. "We must utilize overseas farming as we import about 20 percent of our required goods and foodstuffs. Therefore, we intend for our producers and economic actors to engage in producing the country's required food materials in suitable countries, transfer a portion of the products to Iran, and sell another portion in those same countries," he said. He added that the ministry is seriously pursuing "cooperation with 4-5 countries; work has commenced and good groundwork has been laid." Nouri Ghezleji said that during

recent visits, the ministry "signed memoranda of understanding and substantial headway has been achieved," expressing hope that extra-territorial cultivation in such countries will commence imminently. The minister emphasized that overseas cultivation presents an opportunity to export the technical engineering services. "This will allow our investors, agricultural graduates, and professional farmers to become active in other countries, transfer technology, bring part of the product back to the country, and sell part of it there," he noted. "The government's target is approximately one million hectares of overseas cultivation," he said.

Iran-Armenia trade tops \$1b with over 3.5% growth



Economy Desk

Iran's Ambassador to Armenia announced that bilateral trade between Armenia and Iran has reached approximately \$1 billion, indicating growth exceeding 3.5 percent. Mehdi Sobhani, Iran's Ambassador to Armenia, stated during an interview with Armenia's official television that trade volume between the two nations has reached about \$1 billion, Mehr reported. According to data released by Armenia's Statistical Committee (Armstat), the country's foreign trade with Iran reached \$737.4 million in 2024, representing a 6.5% increase compared to 2023. Bilateral trade during the first five months of the current calendar year also reached \$278.7 million, marking a 4% increase year-on-year. Ambassador Sobhani had earlier indicated Tehran's intention to increase this figure to \$1 billion by 2025. The Iranian Ambassador to Armenia stated, "During the first 11 months of last year, 276,000 Armenian citizens visited Iran for various reasons, while 176,000 Iranian tourists entered Armenia during the same period. This represents a natural process. Iranian tourist arrivals to Armenia during the first 11 months of 2024 increased by 20% compared to 2023." Data from Armenia's Tourism Committee shows that Iranian nationals accounted for 8% of the 691,900 tourists who visited Armenia during the first five months of the current calendar year.

Pakistan eases trade with Iran through new tariff measures

Economy Desk

Iran's commercial attaché in Pakistan said new decisions by Islamabad to reduce certain customs tariffs and base prices had created fresh opportunities for effective engagement between the private sectors of the two sides. According to IRNA, diplomatic efforts by Iran's ambassador in Islamabad and the commercial attaché of the Islamic Republic in Pakistan to reduce customs duties on Iranian exports to Pakistan yielded positive results following multiple meetings with customs officials of the neighboring country. "Pakistan Customs has re-

duced the Protective Regulatory Duty for inclusion in the new fiscal year's budget. Consequently, tariffs on certain Iranian export goods including detergents, milk powder, hot and cold rolled sheets, and tiles/ceramics will be reduced by 5 to 20 percent, with the maximum reduction being 20% for tiles and ceramics," said Morad Nemati Zargaran, Iran's commercial attaché in Pakistan. "With the new approach of Pakistan's government to eliminate redundant tariffs, and upon finalization of the Free Trade Agreement - which we hope will be expedited given both nations'

needs - bilateral trade relations, particularly exports to Pakistan, are expected to expand," he added. Nemati Zargaran pointed to the valuation basis for Iranian tile and ceramic exports to Pakistan, saying, "Since Pakistan Customs recently increased base prices and reduced country classifications from 4 to 3 groups, placing Iran in the 'Other Countries' list, written correspondence and negotiations took place between Iranian and Pakistani officials." "Ultimately, customs authorities of the neighboring country issued an executive directive, placing Iran in a separate category and ap-



plying the lowest base price for Iran compared to other countries," he added. Nemati Zargaran underlined that Pakistan Customs' previous Protective Regulatory Duty on certain Iranian export goods like tiles and ce-

ramics had reached up to 55 percent. Last October, Iran and Pakistan agreed to establish a joint committee to resolve customs issues at shared borders, aiming to leverage mutual trade capabilities.

A look back at Zionism's history, penetration strategy in Iran

Zionists pushed Iran infiltration since Nakba: *Expert*



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

The so-called 12-day war marks the first direct and conventional military confrontation between Iran and Israel since the establishment of the Zionist regime in 1948, a span of 77 years. Up until the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the two countries were close allies. However, the Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic drove a deep wedge between them, both ideologically and politically. The revolution's rallying cry of "defending the rights of the Palestinian people and liberating Al-Quds" stood in stark contrast to the Zionist vision of establishing and maintaining a Jewish state, known as Israel, in Palestine.

Despite mounting tensions over the years, Iran and Israel had steered clear of direct confrontation. Iran, for its part, threw its weight behind resistance groups in Palestine and the region, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Meanwhile, the Zionist regime set up spy networks, carried out assassinations of Iranian scientists, and took steps against Iran's national security.

The 12-day war, however, heralded a new chapter in the standoff between Iran and Israel. It now appears that both sides are on a collision course, with direct military confrontation looming. Signs of this shift began to emerge a few months earlier, on October 7, 2023, when resistance forces led by Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel. This assault left many Israelis dead or captured and dealt a heavy blow to Israel's deterrence.

Roughly 20 months after that incident, the occupying regime, which had long beat the drums of war under the pretext of ending Iran's (peaceful) nuclear program, finally carried out a surprise operation on June 13, 2025 (amid ongoing nuclear talks between Iran and the US), targeting several of Iran's military and nuclear sites. If we set aside the deception and blatant violations of international law by the US and the Zionist regime — especially in striking Iran right in the middle of nuclear negotiations — the simultaneous assassination of several scientists and military commanders, using equipment that had been brought in and operated through infiltration, speaks volumes about the Zionists' years-long efforts to spy on and infiltrate various sectors in Iran.

In this context, Iran Daily sat down with Shadab Asgari, a writer, contemporary historian, and military affairs expert, for an in-depth discussion, the full text of which follows:



The Balfour Declaration of 1917 signaled Great Britain's support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. It inspired the establishment of Zionist organizations in Iran like this one, the Zionist Federation in Iran, circa 1920.
● BEI HATFTSO/MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

IRAN DAILY: It seems the recent war reflects Israel's intelligence penetration into various sectors and the execution of a long-term plan to attack Iran. As a historian, what is your take on the roots and depth of Zionist infiltration in Iran?

ASGARI: That's correct. When the Zionists themselves and American military experts admit that the regime spent 20 years planning this operation, it's clear they had long-term plans to worm their way into Iran's intelligence apparatus. It would be naïve to think Israel's infiltration only sprang up in recent years.

To get to the bottom of Zionist espionage in Iran, we need to turn back the clock and look at history. The first Jewish activities in Iran date back to 1898, when a representative from the Jewish organization Alliance Israélite Universelle came to Iran, met with Mozaffar ad-Din Shah, and, by offering money and resources, secured permission to open the first branch of their schools in Tehran.

This school was established in Tehran in 1900. In the years that followed, similar schools sprang up in Iranian cities like Hamedan, Kermanshah, Sanandaj, Bijar, Nahavand, Tuyserkan, Borujerd, Isfahan, Yazd, and Kashan. These schools operated under the direct supervision of the Alliance's headquarters in Paris. Notably, due to their pro-Jewish nature, the prominent Shia

cleric Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri was staunchly opposed to their establishment in Iran. Among the notable alumni of the Alliance schools was Lieutenant General Ali Razmara, a top military commander during the Pahlavi era and a fierce opponent of the nationalization of Iran's oil industry. He famously questioned, "How can Iranians who cannot even make a pitcher hope to nationalize the oil industry?" This shows the kind of mindset these schools turned out. Zionism in Iran, according to some theories, was formally established in 1910 by a group of young Jews in Hamedan. The first Zionist newspaper,

"Shalom," edited by Mordechai Shalom, was launched on March 21, 1915. In 1919, with the Balfour Declaration commemoration, the Zionist organization officially announced its presence across Iran. Interestingly, their first congress in Iran took place on March 26, 1921 — less than two months after Reza Khan's coup, which toppled the Qajar government and paved the way for the Pahlavi dynasty. After declaring their presence in Iran, the Zionists sent their charter to the foreign ministry and Jamshid Jam, the then-foreign minister of Iran, and established contact with him. Jam, in October 1920, took out

a hefty loan of 500,000 tomans from the British Imperial Bank and handed it to a Bahá'í named Sho'a'ollah Alaei, then a treasury employee, instructing him to pass the funds on to the Cossack forces in western Iran so they could make their way to Tehran for the coup. There is ample evidence that Bahá'ís and Jews played a part in Reza Shah's rise to power.

The first — and perhaps only — Jewish doctor in Reza Khan's administration was Colonel Dr. Habib Levy, who headed up the dental service for both Reza Shah and the army. Dr. Levy, from a very wealthy family, worked closely with the World Jewish Agency



School children line up in queues at the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a Qajari school for Jews in Iran.
● safarnews.com

Shadab Asgari



After declaring their presence in Iran, the Zionists sent their charter to the foreign ministry and Jamshid Jam, the then-foreign minister of Iran, and established contact with him. Jam, in October 1920, took out a hefty loan of 500,000 tomans from the British Imperial Bank and handed it to a Bahá'í named Sho'a'ollah Alaei, then a treasury employee, instructing him to pass the funds on to the Cossack forces in western Iran so they could make their way to Tehran for the coup.



The photo shows the entrance sign of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a Qajari school for Jews in Iran. ● safarnevis.com

and played a crucial role in moving Jews from Iran and Afghanistan to Palestine. His son, Zion, joined the terrorist group, Hagannah, and was actively involved in the massacre of Palestinians and the occupation of their land. As a result, a building and a street in Tel Aviv bear his name in recognition of his actions. In 1958, Mossad's Zaytoun network was established in Iran, with three main branches in the provinces of Khuzestan, Ilam, and Kurdistan. These branches were tasked with recruiting allies in Iran. Meir Ezri, Israel's ambassador and first plenipotentiary in Tehran, as well as Israel's military attaché in Iran, kept in touch with Israeli intelligence agencies and passed on information freely, never once being questioned by the Iranian secret police SAVAK. Moreover, from 1963 onward, when the US and UK pulled out of SAVAK, and under Hassan Pakravan's leadership, control of SAVAK effectively fell into Israeli hands. Even when Israel was still only recognized de facto and not by most countries, senior Iranian military commanders such as General Bahram Aryana, General Fereydoun Jam, and General Gholamreza Azhari — the highest-ranking officers after Mohammad Reza Shah — paid visits to Israel. All of this shows just how far back the Zionists' plans to penetrate Iran go, and how the Islamic Revolution dealt a major blow to their ambitions.

Let's move forward and dig into the reasons behind Israel's infiltration in Iran in recent years. I already touched on the roots of Zionist penetration in Iran in the previous question. What I want to make clear is that their infiltration is nothing new. For years, they laid the groundwork to make inroads not only in Iran but also in Afghanistan and other countries, all to further their own agenda in the area. The subsequent actions of the US in the region have also played into their hands. We saw in 2021 how the US struck a

deal with the Taliban and effectively handed over Afghanistan to them. As a result, a flood of Afghans, claiming to be under Taliban pressure, poured into Iran. Some of them, under Zionist influence, got involved in recent events. My point is, the Zionists have always kept their eyes on infiltrating Islamic countries to push through their objectives. We also shouldn't gloss over the role of the Bahá'ís in Iran. Most of the Zionist infiltration after the Revolution has been carried out by Bahá'ís, who have essentially acted as their operatives within Iran. Their role in the unrest of 2009 has been well established. These individuals have taken an active part in identifying and recruiting infiltrators. Currently, tens of thousands of Bahá'ís live in Iran, and many have been led to believe that, for their own safety, they must hand over information about their surroundings to foreign intelligence services. As a result, Bahá'ís have been systematically and indirectly steered toward gathering security information in Iran. This isn't something new or unique to the recent war. In the past, whenever Zionists had a stake, these individuals carried out intelligence and espionage activities — for example, in the early days after the Revolution and during the Iran-Iraq War, many of these infiltrators in the army and the IRGC of Kermanshah Province spied for the Zionists.

You mentioned the historical roots of infiltration in previous years. Why, despite knowing this background, have we been caught off guard by infiltrators in recent times? In my view, addressing this issue simply wasn't high on our list of threats in previous years, and we let many people slip through the cracks who could have fallen into the enemy's trap. We didn't see them as a potential threat. Now, it's clear that some individuals and groups, as mentioned, have been caught red-handed building quadcopters, military equipment, and operating them.

But saying this doesn't mean we should crack down on everyone. In Iran, we haven't treated minorities and migrant groups this way, and we won't in the future. However, we must keep a close eye on areas vulnerable to enemy intelligence infiltration. As for the Afghans, their recent return to their home country boils down to one reason: Their stay in Iran was illegal. So, we shouldn't tie their departure to the recent conflict. Of course, during the recent war, some Afghans may have been arrested for collaborating with Zionists, and their cooperation with the enemy may have been proven. But this doesn't mean we should tar them all with the same brush. Such actions would be a security blunder as the enemy is out to undermine our unity and stir up tensions within. Therefore, if Afghan migrants have entered the country illegally, they should be deported, but we must not blame an entire ethnicity for these issues. Another point to mention re-

for good money — but then ropes them into more serious tasks and tries to shut the door on their return. For instance, they might be asked to insult the Qur'an and send a video as proof.

How deep do you think enemy infiltration goes, given their ability to assassinate military and security figures with such precision? The exact level of enemy infiltration is hard to pin down because we're not privy to all aspects of the matter. What is clear is that we have had intelligence gaps in some areas and have sometimes dropped the ball. For example, quadcopters had been built inside the country and ended up in enemy hands. These centers were under observation, but there wasn't focused oversight — two organizations were supposed to keep tabs on them at the same time, and this overlap led to lapses in monitoring. On top of that, some individuals — both known and unknown —

many people have been arrested, but these matters haven't been made public for security and national interests. Also, we shouldn't assume the enemy must always dig deep into our security centers to learn the whereabouts of commanders and key figures. Sometimes, this information falls into enemy hands through the public: A rumor about someone's arrest or assassination makes the rounds, relatives or acquaintances check in on the person, and the news gets back to the enemy. Failing to observe security protocols — so-called "speech protection" — also lets information slip through the cracks. The enemy can also hack phones, listen in on calls, and tap into social and online communications. With AI, satellite images, and facial recognition, they can also zero in on targets. But all this doesn't mean the enemy has the upper hand in intelligence. In fact, we should talk about our own intelligence



The juxtaposed photos show two Afghans, arrested on the charge of spying for Israel during the regime's 12-day war of aggression against Iran, being interviewed on Iranian state TV. ● SCRENGRAB

garding infiltration is the role of cyberspace. Some people online are chasing quick money and large sums. When faced with lucrative offers, they may fall for the bait. The enemy starts by asking them to do simple things — like "take a photo of a certain place" in exchange

fell under enemy influence and deviated, and we didn't pick up on it. But even if such incidents have occurred, it doesn't mean infiltration has reached a massive scale or that there's been an intelligence disaster. In fact, it is possible that many security cases have been handled, and

dominance over the enemy. In a country like Israel, where most of the population is trained in military and security matters, we have had such a grip on their security and intelligence centers that we have struck them with pinpoint missile attacks.



An armed quadcopter sits in the middle of an uncovered workshop in Salehieh, Tehran Province, where Mossad's spies had been making equipment to launch attacks against Iranians, in June 2025. ● MEHR



Basij forces stop a suspicious car and search its trunk in Tehran, Iran, during Israel's brutal war of aggression against the country in June 2025. ● M. HASAN ZARIFMANESH/FARS

We let many people slip through the cracks who could have fallen into the enemy's trap. Now, it's clear that some individuals and groups, as mentioned, have been caught red-handed building quadcopters, military equipment, and operating them. But saying this doesn't mean we should crack down on everyone. In Iran, we haven't treated minorities and migrant groups this way, and we won't in the future. However, we must keep a close eye on areas vulnerable to enemy intelligence infiltration.

FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B:

Iranian girls beat Thailand to book final spot

Sports Desk

Iran progressed to the final showpiece of the FIBA Women's Asia Cup Division B thanks to a comfortable 78-52 victory over Thailand in Shenzhen, China, on Saturday.

This was a second win against Thailand in the competition for the Iranian girls, following last Wednesday's 80-62 triumph at the Shenzhen Bay Sports Center.

Standing between Iran and promotion to Division A in today's final showdown is the Chinese Taipei, which came out victorious over Mongolia (92-82) in the other semifinal on Saturday.

Iran displayed strong defensive resolve and timely scoring on Saturday. While Thailand put up a resilient fight, propelled by its sharp-shooting, Iran's cohesive team play, led by players Negin Rasoulipour and Roxanna Barahman, proved too much to overcome.

Barahman had 21 points – including nine from behind the arc – to lead Iran, with Rasoulipour adding 13.

Iranian point guard Nahideh Asadi also finished in double figures, chipping in 11 points during 13:45 minutes on the court.

Thailand was paced by Rattiyakorn Udomsuk's 24 points, while Warinthon Summat dropped 12.

Chasing a historic top division promotion, Iranian girls, who were beaten by Indonesia in the 2023 Div. B final, began their campaign in Shenzhen with an 82-32 hammering of the Cook Islands, before Rasoulipour's 20-point performance, coupled with Mahla Abedi's efficiency of 19, led Greek coach Eleni Kapogianni's side to an 88-59 triumph over Mongolia.

Wednesday's win against Thailand secured a top-spot finish for Iran in Group B of the eight-team tournament.

Meanwhile, The Chinese Taipei – relegated from Div. A in 2023 – revealed in dominant run in Group A, routing Tahiti (122-38), India (83-39), and Kazakhstan (91-47) to advance to the semifinals.



● FIBA

UWW Ranking Series:

Iran settles for triple freestyle bronzes



● IAWFIR

Sports Desk

The final UWW Ranking Series event of the season – the Polyák Imre & Varga János Memorial – was one to forget for Iranian wrestling after the country's freestyle team finished with three bronze medals in Budapest, Hungary.

Ali Savadkouhi brought the curtain down on a mediocre campaign for the four-man squad on Friday, finishing joint-third in the 86kg contests.

The former Asian champion recovered from a last-four fall defeat against ex-Olympic silver medalist Mahamedkhabib Kadzimahamedau of Belarus to beat Kazakhstan's Nurzhan Isagaliyev 3-0.

Abbas Ebrahimzad, Sina Khalili, and Fariborz Babaei were dealt a massive blow in their bid to secure a place in the national team for September's World Championships in Zagreb after failing to grab the gold medal in their respective weight classes.

Ebrahimzad suffered a comprehensive 11-0 loss to Japanese world silver medalist Yoshinosuke Aoyagi in the 70kg semifinals and then was beaten 11-4 by Georgian Akaki Kemertelidze to miss out on the podium.

The other half of the 70kg bracket saw Khalili fall to a 4-1 defeat against Yegor Anchugin of Kazakhstan before he was handed a bronze medal following Mexican Austin Klee Gomez's withdrawal with injury.

The two Iranians' under-par results convinced national team head coach Pejman Dorostkar to give two-time world silver medalist Amir-Mohammad Yazdani a shot at the 70kg slot for September's showpiece.

Meanwhile, Babaei is out of equation for the 79kg contests, leaving Mohammad Nokhodi – a four-time world medal winner – and reigning Asian champion Mahdi Yousefi in the mix for the visit to the Croatian capital.

A gold medalist in last month's Ranking Series in Ulaanbaatar, Babaei failed to repeat the success, suffering a last-eight setback (4-1) against Georgia's Vladimeri Gamkrelidze, who ultimately won the gold, before a 2-0 win against Kazakhstan's Bolat Sakayev sealed a consolation bronze for the Iranian.

Elsewhere in Budapest, reigning world and Olympic champion Akhmed Tazhudinov was in his own league in the 97kg contests, cruising to the gold with four superiority victories, while world under-23 silver medalist Kota Takhshi of Japan marked his return from a nine-month injury with the ultimate prize in the 74kg event.

Ex-Iran captain Hajsafi set for Sepahan return

Sports Desk

Former Iran international fullback Ehsan Hajsafi is on the verge of return to Persian Gulf Pro League club Sepahan, according to Iranian media reports on Saturday.

Hajsafi, 35, parted ways with AEK Athens on Friday after making 118 appearances in four seasons for the Greek top-flight side, registering four goals and 10 assists in all competitions.

"After four unforgettable years, the time has come for me to say goodbye. Wearing this jersey has been an absolute honor, and playing in front of our incredible fans is something I will never forget," Hajsafi, who won a domestic league and cup double with AEK in

2023, wrote on Instagram.

Should his return to Sepahan be sealed in the coming days, it will be a fourth spell for the ex-Iran skipper at his boyhood club.

An academy product at Sepahan, Hajsafi made his senior debut for the club in 2007 and went on to bag 38 strikes and 25 assists in 309 games across different spells, lifting the Iranian league and cup trophies three times apiece, while reaching the AFC Champions League final in 2007.

Having last played for Iran at the AFC Asian Cup last year, the left-footed fullback has won 142 international caps – third all-time national record – and was an integral part of Team Melli at the 2014, 2018, and 2022 World Cup finals.

Sepahan has made six signings during the summer transfer window, including goalkeeper Alireza Akhbari, who joined from Golgozar Sirjan, and former Esteghlal midfielder Arash Rezavand.

Sepahan finished runner-up to Tractor in the Iranian Pro League last season to secure a place at the upcoming AFC Champions League Elite playoffs, where the Isfahan-based outfit plays away to Al Duhail of Qatar on Aug. 12, with the winner qualifying for the West region's 12-team league phase.

French head coach Patrice Carteron left Sepahan earlier in the month in the aftermath of the 12-war between Iran and Israel, with the club announcing former captain Moharram Navidkia as his successor.



● ANGEL MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Lut Desert’s role in sustainable development, global dialogue



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Iranica Desk

Beyond the hot lines of Iran’s eastern geography, where the radiant sun shines brighter than anywhere else on earth upon the soil, the vastness of Lut Desert stands tall with its millennia-old passion and resilience. It is an incomparable treasure that, from the depths of history to the heights of modern science, not only proclaims Iranian identity with deep-seated national pride and vibrant natural vitality but also serves as a profound source of inspiration for dialogue among civilizations and the expansion of human knowledge.

On the anniversary of the registration of Lut Desert on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, we revisit a unique narrative — one that represents the most tangible connection between history, nature, and humanity on the global heritage stage. A story that keeps the footprints of civilization alive amid the scorching sands and the whispering wind in the kaluts, echoing the resilience and enduring spirit of those who have and still do inhabit this extraordinary land, chn. ir wrote.

Spanning over 175,000 square kilometers from northeastern Kerman to the borders of Sistan and Baluchestan and South Khorasan, Lut Desert continuously traverses this vast territory, concealing within itself secrets that continue to astonish the greatest scholars across the globe. Representing just ten percent of Iran’s landmass, it nonetheless commands one hundred percent importance in ecological, scientific, civilizational, and cultural frameworks. The remarkable temperature record of 70.7°C in 2005 is merely a small reflection of the monumental phenomena within this land.

On July 17, 2016, the world finally acknowledged Lut Desert’s greatness by including Iran’s first natural heritage site on the UNESCO World Heritage List. This achievement was not merely a formal registration but a powerful global affirmation of Iran’s millennial legacy of adapting to and coexisting with nature, of its unparalleled scientific potential, and of Lut’s extraordinary stature within the

Earth’s biological and geological processes. This recognition is the culmination of extensive research, rigorous scientific documentation, and collaborative efforts involving government agencies, indigenous communities, and scholarly elites. Over the years, the Lut Desert has evolved from a mere geographic feature into an inspiring emblem in global scientific, cultural, and environmental discourse. Today, Lut is no longer solely a national asset — its story is inscribed on the international stage; a place where every grain of sand whispers a history of resilience and transformation.

The Lut Desert is divided into three main sections: “Northern Lut,” characterized by its sands and expansive dunes; “Central Lut,” with legendary clay pillars and surreal landscapes that seem almost fantastical; and “Southern Lut,” the richest in vegetation, offering a rare oasis of life amidst the arid terrain. Each of these sections reflects profound geological processes — not only from a scientific perspective but also through their aesthetic grandeur — revealing multiple facets of the Earth’s majestic and mysterious natural phenomena.

Today, scientists evoke the image of Lut Desert through satellite imagery, viewing patches of dark, shimmering sand that harbor secrets about the hottest point on Earth. The record-breaking temperatures and comprehensive

academic research have transformed Lut into a vital laboratory for testing hypotheses about climate change, geomorphology, and Earth’s evolving surface — a treasure trove of knowledge unlike any other on the planet. Amid the silence and intense heat of the Lut Desert, evidence of 5,000 years of civilization, creativity, and human existence has been uncovered. Archaeologists have unearthed the remains of three thousand historical artifacts buried within the driest soils of this extraordinary landscape: magnificent fortresses whose origins trace back to millennia BCE, grand caravanserais, ancient

water reservoirs, signs of historic trade routes, and relics of rituals and cultural practices of the peoples who once traversed these corridors. Lut Desert is not only a guardian of nature but also a custodian of the secrets of early humans — a silent witness to the resilience, adaptability, and ingenuity of various Iranian generations. It embodies a continuity of life and culture that has persisted through the ages, silently recording the story of human endurance in one of the most extreme environments on Earth.

Looking at Lut Desert extends well beyond a mere scientific examination of climate. It is an immersive experience in harmonious coexistence, a living testament to a way of life rooted in survival and adaptation within one of the most ruthless ecosystems in the world — an

ecosystem which the Iranian society has demonstrated resilience towards throughout history. Nomads, pastoralists, and tribal migrants over centuries have crafted indigenous methods and innovations that enabled them to thrive amid arid conditions. Today, these traditional practices can serve as inspiring models for sustainable development and resource management — particularly in water and soil conservation — in this era marked by a global climate crisis and environmental uncertainty.

The intangible heritage of Lut Desert — the sounds, rituals, folk traditions, and cultural practices — must be recognized and registered within the international discourse as an integral part of Iran’s cultural identity. Its study and documentation should be expanded so that the Iranian narrative of “prudence in hardship” gains rightful acknowledgment on the global stage, fostering greater understanding and appreciation of this resilient land and its people.

Global perspective

The presence of natural phenomena with exceptional and unparalleled aesthetic and scientific significance — ranging from the iconic clay formations and towering sand dunes to surreal, otherworldly landscapes — are all manifestations of the immense and ongoing geological forces of Earth and time. Lut Desert is a prominent exemplar of the Earth’s major geological history, showcasing

continuous geological processes and remarkable geomorphological features that testify to the dynamic evolution of our planet. These global standards have elevated Lut Desert to the ranks of other internationally recognized natural wonders listed by UNESCO, establishing a foundation for Iran to attain a strategic position in the fields of geotourism and global ecology. The UNESCO registration of Lut Desert is far more than a formal document or a symbolic recognition; it signifies a new chapter in Iran’s regional and international credibility, influence, and leadership in the domains of environmental stewardship and heritage diplomacy.

As the guardian and steward of this magnificent landscape, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts has utilized the outcomes of this UNESCO recognition to strengthen international cooperation and scientific exchange. This designation has also opened pathways for sustainable local development on a global scale, integrating conservation with socioeconomic progress.

With Lut Desert’s inscription on the UNESCO list, the international perception of Iran as a protector and curator of a shared human and natural heritage has been transformed. Moreover, it has rapidly facilitated the establishment of research centers, specialized eco-tourism tours, scientific associations, and global geotourism initiatives focused on this re-

markable landscape. Adventure tourism combined with scientific exploration — approached through an eco-tourism lens — has gained notable significance, positioning Lut as a magnet for sustainable tourism development and cross-disciplinary study.

National responsibilities

The INESCO’s registration of Lut Desert is merely the beginning; what continues to sustain Lut’s prominence is effective management, active participation of local communities, control over irresponsible tourism, and the mitigation of damages caused by unregulated exploitation. Today, the primary challenges can be categorized into three major areas: the water crisis and climate change; pressure from activities outside the framework of sustainable tourism; and the misalignment of some local development projects with UNESCO’s conservation policies.

Conversely, the comprehensive plan developed by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts prioritizes organizing tourism sustainably and providing education for local communities. It also focuses on establishing resilient infrastructure and strengthening collaborative research networks both domestically and internationally. The plan underscores the vital role of NGOs, media awareness, and public engagement in expanding the protective umbrella surrounding this national treasure — ensuring its global credibility is preserved and enhanced.

Today, Lut Desert symbolizes a forward-looking vision for the world — serving as a model of coexistence between civilization and nature amidst some of the most challenging environmental and climatic conditions. This legendary desert is not only a testament to Iranian resilience and courage in confronting nature but also embodies sustainable heritage management. This heritage belongs not only to present generations, but also acts as a profound trust — an inherited legacy from deep history that carries responsibilities for Iran and the global community’s challenging future.



● destinationiran.com



● pinorest.com



President urges ‘dignified’ return of Afghan migrants amid repatriation

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday urged authorities to ensure the ongoing return of undocumented Afghan migrants is carried out with “respect and calm,” amid rising scrutiny over Tehran’s migration policies. Speaking in a meeting with officials from the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, Pezeshkian acknowledged flaws in managing the mass return operation but pushed back against accusations of mistreatment, accusing critics of “hypocrisy” in selectively invoking human rights, president.ir reported. “It’s surprising when those who stayed silent on the bombing and starvation of innocent women and children now suddenly discover human rights over migrant regulation,” he said. Iran, home to one of the largest Afghan diasporas, has ramped up efforts to expel undocumented Afghans, citing

economic pressures and the need for tighter border control.

Pezeshkian said the deportations ultimately serve Afghans’ interests by providing a structured path forward. “Our Afghan brothers and sisters deserve a regulated, dignified presence,” he said. Mohammad Ismail Salim, head of the Taliban-led Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Herat, described Iran’s handling of the repatriation as “respectful” and “appreciated,” during a joint visit to a processing camp in Taybad on Saturday alongside Noor Ahmad Islamjar, the Governor of Herat province. “We won’t forget the generosity of the Iranian people over the past four decades,” Salim told reporters. The Herat delegation arrived at the Dogharoon border crossing for a three-day visit, touring migrant camps and regional facilities including hospitals and tech parks in Mashhad. Several co-operation agreements are expected to be signed during the trip, signaling co-



Afghan migrants arrive from Iran at the Pul-e Abrisham border crossing between Afghanistan and Iran in Afghanistan’s Zaranj on July 13, 2025.

● AFP

ordination between Tehran and Kabul on the contentious migration file. Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni said Iran has worked closely with Afghanistan’s government to ensure coordination and humane treatment. “Seventy percent of those who left this year did so voluntarily,” he said in recent remarks to domestic media. “This is not about hostility. We are not anti-migrant, but a country can only absorb so much.” Iran hosts around six million Afghans, including refugees, documented migrants, and an estimated two million undocumented residents. Since March 21, 2025 nearly 800,000 unauthorized migrants have been repatriated. “We have clear laws. Those who enter illegally must leave,” Momeni said, re-



iterating that legal migrants will not be affected. “We’re not racist. We’re not

chasing people out. We’re applying order—with dignity.”

Iran pushes to revive handicraft sector

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran’s Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, said that Tehran is seeking to shield the country’s fragile handicraft industry from mounting economic strain by rolling out emergency support tools including special credit lines, new social responsibility programs, and a national assistance fund. The comments followed several high-level meetings with industry stakeholders, including hotel owners and eco-lodge operators. Salehi Amiri said the government is drawing up a crisis-response package to keep the country’s centuries-old handicraft sector from falling apart under pressure. “If the production chain breaks down,” he warned, “a large number of people will lose their jobs.”

The minister said two types of support are under discussion: routine programs like banking facilities and training, and crisis-time actions that require “field research” and targeted intervention. The proposed National Handicrafts Support Fund, discussed in recent days with industry associations, is expected to play a “critical” role. Salehi Amiri also urged greater engagement from the private sector through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. “Adapting to the new situation,” he said, “must be part of any sustainable solution.” The minister stressed that restoring the natural cycle of production, distribution, and market access is essential to stabilizing the industry. Without it, he warned, rural workshops and small-scale producers could be pushed out of business.

According to Salehi Amiri, three strategy meetings were held in recent days with hotel operators, eco-lodge owners, and artisans to develop a coordinated plan. Among the ideas floated was the creation of technical working groups to monitor and respond to ongoing challenges. Tourism’s sharp slowdown has also taken a toll on handicraft sales, the minister said, noting that the two sectors are “deeply interlinked.” As visitor traffic dwindles, so too does demand for traditional handmade goods, many of which are sold in tourist-heavy regions. Salehi Amiri said the government has approved a new support package aimed at small workshops and rural artisans. The plan, which includes financial aid, will soon be added to Iran’s broader economic relief programs.

Iranian short film ‘Punishment’ to be screened in Kosovo, China

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Pouya Mofid’s debut short film ‘Punishment’ has been selected for competition at two major international festivals. The film will screen at the 24th DokuFest in Kosovo from August 1 to 9, and is also nominated for Best Screenplay at the 13th Ningbo Short Film Festival in China, to be held from September 19 to 21, ILNA reported. ‘Punishment,’ distributed by Madakto Pictures, is written by Mehdi Asghari Azghadi and marks Mofid’s first professional short with a cast and crew drawn from Iran’s theater and film circles. The Kosovo event is accredited by the European Film Academy and BAFTA, while Ningbo’s recognition by the Short Film Conference (SFC) adds another layer of prestige. Set in a primary school, the 15-minute drama centers on a traumatic incident in which a Black student develops a severe stutter after a harsh punishment from his teacher. Doctors trace the speech disorder to psychological shock. As the boy’s family pursues



legal action, the narrative explores themes of institutional violence and accountability. The lead roles are played by Mohammad Sedighi-Mehr, Shayan Darmipouran, and Sahar Aghasi. Mofid, who co-founded “Khate Farzi,” Isfahan’s first school of filmmaking and visual arts, also teaches directing there alongside his production partner Emad Sedighin. While ‘Punishment’ is his first film to enter the global festival circuit, Mofid is already in pre-production for his feature debut.

Iranian photographer awarded at Canada’s Fine Shot Photo Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian photographer Amirhossein Honarvar was awarded the Jury Commendation at the 2nd Fine Shot Photo Salon in Canada for his image of an elderly giveh maker, a traditional Iranian footwear artisan, working at his bench. Honarvar, who also collaborates with Iran’s Handicrafts Department under the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts captured the moment in a dimly lit workshop. The photo was selected from entries submitted by artists across more than 45 countries, including the United States, Germany, Australia, France, Italy, China and Brazil, ILNA reported.



The festival is held under the auspices of the Fédération Internationale de l’Art Photographique (FIAP), a global body recognized by UNESCO. Seven other works by Honarvar were also accepted by the festival’s jury, several of which spotlight elements of Iranian handicraft. The photographer,

who has won 24 international awards to date, holds two honorary distinctions from FIAP. Some of his pieces are part of the permanent collection at the Musée de l’Élysée in Lausanne, Switzerland. Honarvar’s winning shot was described by judges as “intimate” and “timeless,” paying homage to disappearing crafts. “Documenting these fading traditions is a duty,” the photographer said. “It’s not just about beauty—it’s about memory.” Fine Shot has built a name for itself as a high-profile showcase of visual storytelling rooted in cultural identity and human connection. The 2025 edition wrapped up in Toronto on July 15.

Qajar-era bridge minarets restored in northeast Iran

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has completed the four-month restoration of the minarets on the historic Salar Bridge in Roshtkhar County, Khorasan Razavi Province, according to local heritage officials. The project wrapped up in early July after repairs costing around \$2,270, Roshtkhar’s cultural heritage chief Kazem Kamiyab told IRNA on Saturday. Built during the Qajar era by Kazem Khan Qaraei and designed by Haj Mirza Mohammad, a master architect of the Astan Quds Razavi shrine, the Salar Bridge is a major example of 19th-century brickwork in northeastern Iran. The bridge features seven arches, stands seven meters high, and spans roughly 75 meters across



the Salar stream near the Roshtkhar-Torbat Heydariyeh road. Its four brick minarets, two of which had suffered serious decay, are considered standout features of the region’s architectural legacy. Work included stabilizing the foundations, replacing crumbling bricks, reinforcing the arches, re-grouting, and fully restoring the southeastern and northwestern minarets. Kamiyab said the restoration was a joint effort by the Cultural Her-

itage Office and local volunteers from the village of Sangan. One-quarter of the budget, about \$570, came from Mohammad Karim Kazemi Qaraei, a philanthropist and descendant of the bridge’s original patron. “It’s a way to honor a family legacy and protect our roots,” he said. Listed as a national heritage site since April 13, 2003, the bridge lies 27 kilometers from Roshtkhar, a town about 216 kilometers south of Mashhad. The district is home to 300 registered tourist attractions, but many remain off the beaten path. Kamiyab said the county will soon host its first cultural heritage donors’ forum to pool private and public funds for the preservation and promotion of Roshtkhar’s historic landmarks.