

Tehran-E3 talks to focus on sanctions removal, nuclear program: *Baqaei*

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) speaks at a meeting with provincial governors in Tehran, July 21, 2025.
● president.ir

Iran's talks with Europe on terrain of distrust

ANALYSIS

Britain, France and Germany—the so-called European Troika—have raised the prospect of reinstating UN Security Council sanctions against Iran, amid a fragile truce that came into force in the wake of an Israeli-US aggression on the Islamic Republic last month Iran, Israel and the United States. Yet, doubts linger over how effective such a move by the European trio could truly be. It has been nearly a month since strikes by Israel and the US targeted Iranian territory—an interval best described as a “diplomatic coma” in Iran’s relations with the West. It is a situation where one can neither speak of the death of diplomacy nor of its active presence and influence in the international arena. However, a video call between the foreign ministers of the Troika plus the European Union’s foreign policy chief with Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi marks a crucial signal. If both sides proceed cautiously, there remains a path out of this crisis and the diplomatic paralysis it has induced. According to Western media, the senior European diplomats urged Iran to achieve “tangible progress towards reviving the nuclear deal by the end of summer” and warned that failure to do so will leave them “prepared to trigger the snapback mechanism and swiftly restore UN Security Council sanctions.”

Iran’s foreign minister hit back that the US—not Iran—had effectively brought the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, “to its deathbed”: first by unilaterally walking out of the agreement, and later by launching military strikes in the midst of diplomacy. Any future deal, he insisted, must be “fair, balanced and grounded in mutual benefit,” with Iran open to talks only if its interests are recognized. He dismissed threats and pressure, calling snapback “an outdated tool” with neither moral nor legal standing—unlikely, he warned, to deliver European goals.

Unverified reports now suggest that Europe may have proposed postponing the snapback of sanctions, limiting Iranian enriched uranium, and arranging a new round of talks between senior diplomats from Iran and Europe. Whether any of these will materialize remains to be seen in the coming days.

Its and buts of snapback

UN Security Council Resolution 2231, the legal backbone of the JCPOA, allows a unilateral path for reinstating pre-deal UN sanctions against Iran—unbound by the usual requirement for unanimity. While Iran first invoked this mechanism due to unmet JCPOA commitments by other parties, the European Troika’s political reversal—aimed at reimposing sanctions—lacks comparable legal basis. After all, Iran remained the most compliant party, even as its nuclear facilities were bombed during diplomatic talks with the US over the past months.

The US first tested the reimposition of sanctions in 2020, but efforts faltered without broader support from other parties to the JCPOA due to Washington’s departure from the deal. Now, with Europe pushing forward in a U-turn, activation of the mechanism risks undermining multilateral frameworks and stifling nuclear diplomacy with Iran.

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Tehran-E3 talks to focus on sanctions removal, nuclear program: *Baqaei*

China upholds Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy

International Desk

Iran said on Monday that upcoming talks between Tehran and the three European powers – Britain, France and Germany – would focus on “removal of sanctions and issues related to Iran’s nuclear program.”

Foreign Ministry’s spokesman Esmail Baqaei in his weekly presser said that the negotiations would be held at the level of deputy foreign ministers in Turkish city of Istanbul on Friday. Baqaei added that the deputy of EU foreign policy chief would also participate in the negotiations.

In recent weeks, the three European powers have threatened to trigger the UN “snapback” mechanism against Tehran if no deal is reached between Iran and the United States. Tehran and Washington had held five rounds of nuclear talks since April, but a planned meeting on June 15 was cancelled after Israel and the US launched aggressions against Iran, triggering a 12-day conflict.

“At this stage, we have no intention of speaking with America,” Baqaei said.

The snapback mechanism allows

for the return of anti-Iran sanctions suspended under the 2015 nuclear deal from which the US withdrew in 2018 and the European parties failed to fulfill their commitments.

The 2015 deal, reached between Iran and the UN Security Council’s permanent members – Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States – plus Germany, imposed curbs on Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

But it unraveled when the United States, during Donald Trump’s first term as president, unilaterally withdrew from the accord and reimposed sweeping sanctions.

Europe’s failure

The Europeans had pledged continued support for the deal, but the mechanism intended to offset US sanctions never materialized effectively and many Western firms were forced to exit Iran.

Baqaei blamed European powers for the failure of the deal, accusing them of breaking their commitments.

“The European parties have been at fault and negligent in implementing” the nuclear agreement,



he said. Western powers – led by the US – have long accused Tehran of secretly seeking nuclear weapons capability.

Iran has repeatedly denied the accusation, insisting its nuclear program is solely for civilian purposes such as energy production.

Iran-China-Russia meeting

Baqaei also said Tehran is scheduled to host a trilateral meeting today about the nuclear issue and the potential reimposition of sanctions with Chinese and Russian representatives.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Beijing would “continue

to play a constructive role in pushing relevant sides to restart dialogue and negotiations, and reach a solution that takes into account the legitimate concerns of all parties.”

Meanwhile, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu in a phone conversation with the Director General of Political and Security Affairs at the French Foreign Ministry, Frederic Mondoloni, on Monday emphasized the need to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through political and diplomatic means, urging all parties to resume dialogue and negotiations as soon as possible to prevent

escalation of the situation, according to Global Times.

“The right of Iran to peacefully utilize nuclear energy should be guaranteed,” Ma said.

Snapback mechanism

Meanwhile, Germany has said the European trio will work to find a sustainable and verifiable diplomatic solution.

“If no solution is reached by the end of August... the snapback also remains an option for the E3,” said German Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Giese.

Using the snapback clause was “meaningless, unjustifiable and

immoral,” Baqaei said, arguing that Iran only began distancing itself from the agreement in response to Western non-compliance.

“Iran’s reduction of its commitments was carried out in accordance with the provisions outlined in the agreement,” he said. Mikhail Ulyanov, permanent representative of Russia to international organizations in Vienna, in an interview with Russia’s Izvestia newspaper, said the troika has lost the right to reimpose international sanctions since they have repeatedly violated the terms of the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“As for the threats of Westerners to initiate a mechanism for restoring sanctions, it is quite rightly noted that the idea is illegitimate. The Americans themselves withdrew from the JCPOA, renouncing the rights and obligations of a participant in the nuclear deal, and the United Kingdom, Germany and France are violators of both the JCPOA and UN Security Council resolution 2231. This means that they have also deprived themselves of the right to initiate a “snapback,” Ulyanov said.

Iran, Russia launch search-and-rescue drill in Caspian Sea

International Desk

Iran and Russia on Monday launched a joint search-and-rescue drill in the Caspian Sea with the aim of enhancing the level of cooperation and examining the capabilities of their forces.

Naval forces from Iran’s Navy, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps’ Navy, and Iran’s Law Enforcement Command on behalf of Iran and Navy of the Russian Federation are taking part in the drill, codenamed CASAREX 2025. The three-day exercise, held under the banner “Together for a Safe and Secure Caspian Sea,” is hosted by the Northern Fleet of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Navy.



IRNA

Military observers from other Caspian littoral states will also be in attendance.

Spokesperson for CASAREX 2025 Second Admiral Mohsen Razzaghi

said that the hybrid exercises are taking place in two coastal and maritime phases in the Caspian Sea.

According to the spokesperson,

the objectives of the exercise are to demonstrate the capabilities of regional naval forces in establishing security and safety, enhance the confidence of vessel personnel and operational units, and foster cohesion among the naval forces of Caspian Sea states.

Earlier on Monday, the Iranian Army announced that Russian vessel SB738 entered the exercise area and was welcomed by Iran’s Naval Forces.

Meanwhile, the commander of the Russian vessel expressed hope that such exercises would strengthen cooperation between the two countries, and that they could continue conducting such drills regularly.

Tehran, Moscow confer on military cooperation



Aziz Nasirzadeh

Andrey Belousov

International Desk

Iranian Defense Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh met with his Russian counterpart Andrey Belousov in Moscow on Monday to discuss expanding military cooperation, according to Iran’s ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali.

Jalali said that the meeting focused on “enhancing bilateral cooperation in the military and defense fields.” The Iranian diplomat said Nasirzadeh also attended a Sunday meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ali Larijani, top adviser to Iran’s Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Larijani “conveyed assessments of the escalating situation in the Middle East and around the Iranian nuclear program,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said of the unannounced meeting.

Putin expressed Russia’s “well-known positions on how to stabilize the situation in the region and on the political settlement of the Iranian nuclear program,” he added.

No further details were immediately available about the surprise visit by Larijani to Moscow.

Iran and Russia enjoy a close diplomatic and political relationship.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran successfully conducts suborbital test with Qased satellite carrier

National Desk

Iran on Monday conducted a suborbital test with the Qased satellite launch vehicle to evaluate new technologies developed by the country’s space industry.

“The results of the test will be used to improve the performance of the country’s satellites and space systems,” Iranian Space Agency said in a statement.

Iran has so far launched several satellites into space. The achievements come despite the country’s suffering from decades of sanctions imposed by the United States and its Western allies.

The developments and numerous other successful efforts on the part of the country have awarded it a place among the world’s top 10 nations, which are capable of developing and launching satellites.

New 183 MW unit at Neka power plant in Mazandaran comes on stream

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday inaugurated the development project of Neka power plant, comprising two 183-megawatt gas units and one 180-megawatt steam unit, in Mazandaran Province via video conference. The new 183-megawatt gas unit at the power plant was commissioned during the ceremony, attended by Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi.

Constructed in less than five months — a timeframe considered record-breaking for civil engineering projects — this unit was prioritized by the government to address the electricity supply-demand imbalance.

The commissioning of the gas unit at Shahid Salimi Neka Power Plant has created indirect employment for 1,000 individuals and direct employment for 200 individuals in the northern province.

Officials at the power plant stated that the commissioning of the gas unit now supplies electricity to 100,000 households and meets part of the industrial electricity demand in Mazandaran Province.

The project's executive managers announced that 95% of the facilities and equipment for the new gas unit were

domestically manufactured and produced, resulting in significant foreign currency savings.

Shahid Salimi Neka Power Plant, with a production capacity of 2,214 megawatts, is one of the country's largest power plants, capable of supplying over four percent of the nation's electricity. Equipped with four steam units (each 440 MW), two gas units (each 137.6 MW), and one 160-megawatt combined cycle steam unit, it plays a crucial role in stabilizing the national power grid by supplying over four percent of the country's electricity.

At the inauguration ceremony for the third gas unit of Shahid Salimi Neka Power Plant, the Iranian energy minister told reporters, "Currently, very important projects are underway in the electricity sector, with over 1,000 projects in the water and electricity industry being implemented, nearly 800 of which pertain to the electricity industry."

Aliabadi said, "Within this short period, we have brought over 2,000 megawatts of power plant capacity online, and it is expected that this figure will soon reach 3,000 megawatts."

He referred to the country's status regarding solar power plant devel-



opment, stating that planning for approximately 30,000 megawatts had been undertaken to this end. He noted that equipment for 7,000 megawatts had already been imported and was currently being installed.

On Monday, the energy minister trav-

eled to Mazandaran to inaugurate several water and electricity industry projects. The agenda for the minister's trip to Mazandaran included, commissioning the third 183-megawatt gas unit at the Neka power plant; inaugurating five distributed generation pow-

er plant projects and 21 substation and ultra-distribution line construction/expansion projects; commissioning the Sari city water supply completion project from Shahid Rajaei Dam, including a 20,000-cubic-meter reservoir and a 3.2-kilometer transmission line; and commencing the executive operations of the Miyandorud water conveyance project.

78,000 MW of investment demand in renewables

Emphasizing the utilization of private sector capacity in implementing water and renewable energy projects, the minister said, "There is demand exceeding 78,000 megawatts in the country for developing renewable energy."

According to IRNA, Aliabadi, speaking at the ceremony for commissioning the Sari water supply completion project and launching the Miyandorud water transfer project's executive operations, stated, "The ministry intends to expand projects in the water and renewable energy sectors by attracting private investment and public participation." He added that implementing water transfer projects is being pursued with seriousness, emphasis, and special attention from the government within the ministry of energy.

Economy posted positive investment growth in past three years: CBI data



Economy Desk

According to Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s statistics, gross fixed capital formation (investment) in Iran's economy recorded positive growth over three consecutive years from 1401 (began on March 21, 2022) to 1403 (began on March 20, 2024). According to ISNA, gross fixed capital formation in Iran's economy experienced positive growth over the consecutive three-year period (1401

to 1403).

The figures show that the positive growth follows a period where the average investment growth rate was negative 6.9 percent during the 1390s (2010s decade) and zero in the year 1400.

Based on the aforementioned data, investment in Iran's economy registered growth rates of 6.7 percent, 6.3 percent, and 3.8 percent in the years 1401, 1402, and 1403 respectively.

Specialized expo on Iranian infrastructure industries opens in Tehran

Economy Desk

Iran's Food, Medicine, IT, Energy and Logistics Exhibition, also known as Iran Infrastructure, was inaugurated at Tehran International Permanent Fairgrounds on Monday.

The participant booths at the exhibition encompass a broad spectrum of products and services related to infrastructure, including food and pharmaceutical industries, novel technologies in the information technology sector, energy and consumption optimization solutions, transportation, and smart logistics systems.

The primary objectives

for holding the exhibition are to showcase the country's genuine capabilities and capacities, develop domestic and foreign interactions, sign memoranda of understanding for the implementation of major infrastructure projects, and introduce Iran as a resilient and forward-looking hub in the field of infrastructure and development.

The four-day exhibition is not only an opportunity to introduce national capabilities and foster international interactions, but also, given its role as the first large-scale exhibition following a one-month hiatus in the capital, holds particular



importance in restoring prosperity to the country's exhibition calendar and business environment. The exhibition commenced with the attendance of the President Masoud Pezesh-

kian's economic advisor, deputies of the Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, industrialists, economic activists, associations, guilds, and knowledge-based companies.



Iran's talks with ...

Sanctions return and what lies ahead

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Should the snapback proceed, all prior Security Council resolutions—1696, 1737, 1747, 1803, 1835 and 1929—will be restored. For Iran, this would not just be a diplomatic setback: it would deepen economic suffering, disrupt foreign trade, tighten export-import channels—especially in oil and energy—and hamper investment, banking, insurance and transit sectors.

The return of UN sanctions—with Iran once again being labeled a global threat under Chapter VII of the UN Charter—could set the stage for a major confrontation in 2025. While this echoes the harsh pre-nuclear deal era, the geopolitical landscape has shifted dramatically. This time, the world could unite to set in motion one of the toughest sanction eras for Iran or Europe might simply weaponize the move to mask its own political maneuvering. If China and Russia do not back the

sanctions, and Western states apply leniency, the impact may remain theoretical.

But a pessimistic scenario—which sees a coordinated comeback of sanctions supported by global powers—could badly harm Iran's economy. Such restrictions would severely hit its oil sales, transit, financial services, pharmaceutical industries and wider trade.

Postponement: A chance for diplomacy or keeping pressure?

Reports of a delayed snapback mechanism and sanctions return remain unconfirmed, but media reports suggest it

is being discussed in Iran-EU talks. Tehran has yet to comment, but if true, the move could signal Europe's attempt to carve a new path toward its objectives. According to French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot, Europe will negotiate with Iran through August—triggering snapback by September if no deal is reached. Europe has until October 18 to reinstate sanctions.

The key question is whether the trio made this offer to de-escalate tensions and pursue diplomacy—or if it is only a pretext to justify tougher measures via snapback. Answers may emerge during the July 25 Iran-trio meeting in Istan-

bul. For now, Iran remains unconvinced by the proposal, viewing nuclear-related sanctions as politically motivated and illegal from the outset. Tehran sees no advantage in allowing the West to maintain its snapback leverage.

Past negotiations have taught Iran that diplomatic overtures do not necessarily guarantee compliance and Western partners do not always honor their commitments. While preventing a repeat of previous failures (like military strikes during talks) might bring Iran back to the table, securing its core demands—especially on nuclear rights—remains essential for any deal.

Leadership without protocol

A world in disorder



By Kamran Yeganegi
Foreign policy expert

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

At the dawn of the 21st century, we face a world more interconnected, vulnerable, and in need of clear rules and responsible leadership than ever before. However, what we are witnessing in reality is a divergence from the very principles upon which modern civilization was built: multilateralism, respect for national sovereignty, diplomacy over violence, and predictability in the behavior of statesmen. Today, we clearly observe a form of leadership failure on the global stage — a failure stemming less from a lack of resources or external threats, and more from the presence of leaders who distance themselves from the protocols of international politics and sometimes deliberately undermine the rules of the global game.

The international order, though always relative and fraught with tensions, was built over the past decades on a minimal consensus among countries regarding fundamental principles. This order was born of bloody wars, difficult treaties, and decades of humanity's harsh experience in an insecure world. Yet, when leaders consciously or carelessly disregard these frameworks and reduce politics to personal preferences, media spectacle, or partisan competition, the outcome is nothing but global instability, weakening of multilateral institutions, and the spread of crises from one point to another.

This phenomenon is clearly visible in the conduct of some of today's prominent leaders — those whose decisions do not emerge from the think tanks of expert institutions, but rather from immediate impulses, digital polls, or instant reactions to events. A president who changes his rhetoric daily, violates his country's official positions with an unpremeditated tweet, or considers contradictory statements a sign of tactical intelligence, does not draw new boundaries in politics but rather erodes the public trust both domestically and internationally.

In such an environment, diplomatic wisdom gives way to political narcissism; negotiation does not replace confrontation but becomes merely a tool to manage appearances; and instability is not an unintended consequence but part of a conscious strategy



US President Donald Trump (R) signs a series of executive orders at the White House on January 20, 2025, the day of his inauguration.

JABIN BOTSFORD/
THE WASHINGTON POST



A president who changes his rhetoric daily, violates his country's official positions with an unpremeditated tweet, or considers contradictory statements a sign of tactical intelligence, does not draw new boundaries in politics but rather erodes the public trust both domestically and internationally.



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (R) addresses the 79th session of General Assembly of the United Nations on September 27, 2024. Empty seats can be seen after most delegates walked out.

UN

by leaders who accept order only insofar as it serves their immediate interests.

Gaza today is the tangible embodiment of this international disorder — where massive military attacks, the killing of civilians, and the destruction of vital infrastructure occur with almost no political consequences for the perpetrators. The world watches but does nothing because the language of power has replaced the language of law. Syria, from another perspective, is suffering chronic instability fueled by multilayered interventions, proxy competitions, and the failure of international organizations to manage complex internal crises. However, the root causes of these crises lie not only in the region's geopolitical structure or colonial legacy. A significant part stems from the absence of ethical lead-

ership at the global level — a void that has allowed states to violate their neighbors' borders without shame or fear of punishment, disregard national sovereignty, and turn international law into a tool for short-term security interests. When the Security Council remains silent in the face of such conduct, or great powers engage in blatant double standards, confidence in the global order collapses, yielding a kind of anarchy that is not theoretical, but the everyday reality of state actions.

Meanwhile, the decline in the authority of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the Security Council, and even international courts is not only the result of state pressures but also the consequence of a collective lack of will to restore the legitimate authority of these

bodies. These organizations, created to safeguard peace, justice, and global security, now face internal threats stemming from world leaders' disregard for recommendations, resolutions, and legal norms.

So, what is the way out of this deadlock? Undoubtedly, a return to politics based on rules rather than individual wills is essential. The world needs a redefinition of leadership in the 21st century — leadership founded not on media hype but on the credibility of institutions, historical experience, and sincerity in words and actions. We need statesmen who have the capacity to listen, not just to speak; who understand the difference between tactics and instability, and between flexibility and opportunism.

Leadership without protocol may yield short-term gains, but

these are built on the destruction of long-term relations, the erosion of public trust, and the instability of the global system. The experience of the 20th century has shown that whenever the world strays from the path of rationality, disaster follows. If we do not learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it — this time perhaps at even greater cost.

In conclusion, what is taking shape today is not a more just, secure, or sustainable world, but a more chaotic, unstable, and dangerous one — a world where the illusion of individual-centric leadership casts a shadow over the reality of collective diplomacy. Rebuilding this world requires a return to simple but vital principles: honesty, commitment, order, and above all, leadership based on ethics and law.



Criticizing Netanyahu moral obligation, not anti-Semitism



By Christopher Leonard
Founder, CEO of OMG Media Partners

OPINION

In the months since October 7, 2023, when Hamas carried out an attack on Israeli civilians, the world has watched in growing horror as the Israeli cabinet — led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — has unleashed a campaign of destruction across the Gaza Strip that has few modern parallels. Entire families

wiped out. Schools and hospitals reduced to rubble. Aid convoys bombed. Journalists silenced. Over 65,000 Palestinians killed, the vast majority of them women and children, according to the United Nations and humanitarian groups.

And yet, as calls for accountability and restraint rise, Netanyahu's response has been consistent and cynical: Any criticism of Israel is labeled "anti-Semitism". This is not only intellectually dishonest — it's dangerous. It cheapens the real, rising threat

of anti-Semitism globally by weaponizing it as a political shield for a cabinet engaging in what many experts now consider war crimes.

Let me be clear: Anti-Semitism is real. It is a hatred that has haunted Jewish communities for centuries and led to unimaginable atrocities, including the Holocaust. But the demand for human rights and dignity for Palestinians is not born from that hatred — it is born from the very lessons that the Holocaust taught the world.

What Netanyahu's cabinet is doing in Gaza — dehumanizing a civilian population, forcing displacement, destroying infrastructure, and killing indiscriminately — is not a defense of the Jewish people. It is a betrayal of Jewish values, international law, and basic human decency.

Many Jewish voices, both in Israel and around the world, have been among the most courageous in speaking out against this violence. Organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace, Breaking the Silence, and thousands

of Israeli and diaspora Jews have risked censure to declare: "Not in our name." These are not self-hating Jews. These are people who understand that silence in the face of injustice is complicity.

And yet Netanyahu clings to the narrative that he — and he alone — represents the Jewish people. He does not. He represents a right-wing cabinet clinging to power through fear, division, and war. A cabinet that has made permanent occupation its policy. That has expanded

settlements in violation of international law. That has rejected every viable path to peace and a two-state solution.

What we are witnessing is not an age-old ethnic or religious conflict. It is the logical endgame of a decades-long system of apartheid and impunity. And the world is finally beginning to say so.

That is not anti-Semitism. That is moral clarity.

The article first appeared on JudgeNap.com.



● change.org



What Netanyahu's cabinet is doing in Gaza — dehumanizing a civilian population, forcing displacement, destroying infrastructure, and killing indiscriminately — is not a defense of the Jewish people. It is a betrayal of Jewish values, international law, and basic human decency.

Israel's narrative cannot survive truth

So it's silencing world

 **By Somdeep Sen**
Author, researcher

O P I N I O N

We are living in truly extraordinary times. We recently witnessed the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese being sanctioned by the United States for doing her job — that is, documenting Israel's abuses against Palestinians during its ongoing military assault on Gaza. But with more than 58,000 Palestinians killed to date in Gaza, the case for Israel is weaker than ever. So, for Israel's sake, we need to silence and ban everything. Of course, silencing and censorship have been the modus operandi of the pro-Israel camp since October 2023. In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack on Israel, they came for all those who insisted that the history of Palestine and Israel did not begin on October 7, 2023, and for pointing to the longer history of occupation, settler colonialism, or the siege of Gaza since 2007 — they were silenced, censored, and punished. Those were the days of the now-discredited reports of "be-headed babies". Across the US and Europe, some faced death threats and social media attacks, while others were reprimanded by employers and line managers for criticising Israeli policies or publicly expressing pro-Palestinian views. In schools across Maryland, Minnesota, Florida, and Arizona, teachers were suspended and student clubs shut down for pro-Palestine activism. University professors in the US and the United Kingdom were reported to the police for "liking" or sharing pro-Palestinian social media posts. In May 2024, Maura Finkelstein became the first tenured aca-

dem to be dismissed for anti-Zionist speech. She was fired from Muhlenberg College after posting a Palestinian poet's work. Between October 2023 and now, there have been scores of such cases around the world. Only a few days ago, four adjunct professors at the City University of New York were dismissed for their Palestine solidarity activism.



● THE INTERCEPT

Then they came for the press. While the foreign press has been banned from entering Gaza, Palestinian journalists there have been treated as legitimate military targets by Israel. On average, 13 journalists have been killed per month — a toll higher than that of "both World Wars, the Vietnam War, the wars in Yugoslavia, and the United States war in Afghanistan combined". It is the deadliest conflict for media workers ever recorded. Elsewhere, journalistic voices — especially those of Middle Eastern or North African descent — have been systematically silenced for supporting the Palestinian cause or criticising the Israeli cabinet. This includes Australian radio host Antoinette Lattouf, who was dismissed in December 2023 after posting a Human Rights Watch report alleging that "Israel was using starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza". Palestinian-Canadian journalists Yara Jamal (CTV) and Zahraa al-Akhrass (Global News, during maternity leave) were both sacked in October 2023, following pressure from Honest Reporting Canada. Briahna Joy Gray and Katie Halp-

er were also fired from Hill News for statements critical of Israel. Gray announced on X: "The Hill has fired me ... there should be no doubt that ... suppressing speech — particularly when it's critical of the state of Israel." Beyond dismissals, Western media executives have shaped the narrative, repeating Israeli propaganda, mischaracterising Pal-

estinian activism as pro-Hamas or anti-Semitic, portraying Israelis as victims far more often than Palestinians, and whitewashing Israeli war crimes in Gaza. The BBC, in particular, has faced repeated criticism for its pro-Israel bias. From the language used in headlines to the disproportionate airtime given to Israeli officials, its reporting has consistently been accused of downplaying Palestinian suffering and mirroring Israeli cabinet talking points. Staff resignations, open letters, and public protests have all challenged the broadcaster's editorial stance on Gaza. At Upday, Europe's largest news aggregator owned by Axel Springer, employees were instructed to "colour the company's coverage of the war in Gaza with pro-Israel sentiment". Internal documents obtained by The Intercept revealed staff were told not to "push anything involving Palestinian casualty tolls" unless "information about Israel" was given "higher up in the story". There is more. After October 7, students at Harvard were subjected to terrifying doxxing campaigns labelling them anti-Semitic or terrorist

sympathisers, their photos and personal data shared publicly. As Israel's scholasticide continued in Gaza, the silencing spread on campuses across the US and Europe. Palestine solidarity encampments saw students demanding that their institutions cut ties with Israeli universities and the military-industrial complex. They faced brutal police crackdowns, suspensions, and some were denied graduation. Universities swiftly imposed new restrictions on gatherings and protests to curb student Palestine solidarity.



Journalists, relatives, and friends pray over the bodies of journalists Sari Mansour and Hassouna Esleem after they were killed in an Israeli bombardment at Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip on November 19, 2023.
● MAJDI FATHI/NURPHOTO

Now, under a Trump administration, such suppression is public policy, extending to threats of arrest, denaturalisation, and deportation for pro-Palestinian voices, including lawmakers like NYC mayor Zohran Mamdani. Trump falsely labelled him "illegal", branded him a "communist", and threatened arrest if he obstructed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) "operations" — echoing GOP Representative Andy Ogles's call for denaturalisation and deportation, citing alleged misrepresentations in Mamdani's naturalisation without any evidence. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt confirmed that the Justice Department had received related requests. We have also seen Palestinian flags banned at sporting and music

events. Individuals have been refused entry into public venues and businesses for wearing a keffiyeh. The International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan was warned that he and the ICC would be "destroyed" if they did not drop the case against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant. Four ICC judges were sanctioned by the US government. Academy Award-winner Susan Sarandon was dropped by her talent agency, UTA, for remarks at a Palestine solidarity rally.

Melissa Barrera was dismissed from the cast of *Scream VII* for social media posts describing Israeli actions as genocide and ethnic cleansing. Spyglass Media Group stated it has "zero tolerance for antisemitism ... including false references to genocide, ethnic cleansing, Holocaust distortion". Recently, performers like Bob Vylan and Irish group Kneecap used their platforms at music festivals to show solidarity with Palestine. The group now faces terror charges. Vylan's shows in Europe were cancelled, and his US visa revoked, putting an upcoming tour of the country in doubt. The pro-Israel camp also launched a campaign against the Glastonbury Festival after both artists performed there in June. They

targeted the BBC for airing the performances live and pressured organisers to distance themselves from the musicians. The backlash made clear that even major cultural institutions are not safe from censorship efforts. Adding to this troubling trend, widely respected Israeli-American historian and genocide scholar Omer Bartov has become a focal point of a fierce backlash. In an op-ed for *The New York Times*, titled "I'm a Genocide Scholar. I Know It When I See It", Bartov declared that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, pointing to the systematic infrastructure destruction, forced population shifts, and rhetoric by Israeli leaders, arguing it matches both UN and legal definitions of genocide. Since then, he has been slammed by pro-Israel factions, accused of misapplying the term, and urged to be "cancelled," a campaign he rebuts by highlighting that many genocide studies experts share his conclusion. The reputational assault currently faced by Bartov demonstrates how even the world's leading genocide experts are now being targeted for naming Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide. This may already appear to be an extensive campaign of suppression. But consider: What does it say about Israel's position if it relies so heavily on censorship? Nonetheless, it remains insufficient. For Israel's sake, every student, academic, activist, musician, artist, or lawmaker who criticises its policies must now be branded a terror supporter. Every civil society organisation, human rights group, or international body documenting Israeli abuses must be labelled anti-Semitic. Only then can we claim we saw nothing. Only then can we say we heard nothing. And only then can we justify why we did nothing when the genocide was ongoing in Gaza.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

Volleyball Nations League:

Iran out in preliminaries
but fuels optimism for future

Sports Desk

Iran's bid for a coveted spot in the Volleyball Nations League Finals ended in vain, but the future remains bright for Italian head coach Roberto Piazza and his team.

On Sunday, star opposite Amin Esmaeilnejad chipped in a game-high 19 points as Iran swept Bulgaria in straight sets (25-17, 25-17, 25-16) in Gdansk to finish the preliminary round in the eighth place of the 18-team table with six wins in 12 outings. Outside-hitter Amirhossein Esfandiari also had an excellent all-around performance in the Iranian outfit, delivering 14 points, with eight kills, four blocks and two aces.

The emphatic victory – coupled with defeats for the United States and Ukraine against Japan and Canada, respectively – briefly gave Iran a last-gasp hope for a place in the Finals, lifting Team Melli by seven spots in the table. However, Slovenia rallied from behind to edge out Serbia in a five-set thriller in Ljubljana later in the day and leapfrog Iran in the standings.

In fact, an eighth-place finish would have been enough for Iran to progress, had China – second from bottom in the preliminary table – not automati-



Iranian opposite Amin Esmaeilnejad (10) goes up for a spike during a straight-set victory over Bulgaria at the Volleyball Nations League in Gdansk, Poland, on July 20, 2025.

● FIVB

cally qualified as the host of the VNL Finals, which start on July

30 in Ningbo.

"It doesn't matter if we're in or

not, we always have to play our best volleyball," Piazza said after

Sunday's victory. "We wanted to show that we can play at our

level regardless of the pressure. I think we served very well and showed great discipline with our blocking."

"It was amazing today because we played, I think, our best game in the tournament.

"Bulgaria won against Poland yesterday, so maybe they thought it would be easy against Iran, but that is a wrong mentality. I am really happy because our guys played in a way that we need to for a place in the top level of volleyball," added the Italian, who was appointed to Iranian job in February.

Despite failing to secure a first VNL last-eight spot since 2022, Piazza's team has definitely done enough to win over Iranian fans again – following a dire run of results over the past couple of years that saw Team Melli finish in the bottom three of the VNL table on two occasions and miss out on a berth for Paris Olympics last summer.

Next for Iran and Piazza, who set his sights on a strong Olympic campaign three years from now upon taking the Iranian role, is September's FIVB World Championship in the Philippines, where the Asian powerhouse has been drawn into the same group as the host nation, Egypt, and Tunisia.

French midfielder Nzonzi leaves
Sepahan for 'safety reasons'

Sports Desk

Former France international Steven Nzonzi walked out on his contract with Sepahan on Sunday, bringing an end to weeks of speculation about his future at the Persian Gulf Pro League club.

A 2018 World Cup winner, the 36-year-old Frenchman – who had not reported for Sepahan's preseason earlier this month – is the second foreign employee to leave the club following the 12-day war between Iran and Israel, which was triggered by Israel's aerial aggression on Iranian territory on June 13.

French head coach Patrice Carteron stepped from his role days before a ceasefire went into effect on July 24,

with Sepahan announcing club legend Moharram Navidkia as his successor.

"Thank you to the great people of Isfahan and this beautiful city for the way you welcomed me and family," Nzonzi wrote on Instagram on Sunday, adding: "Me and my family decided that it was best for us not to come back especially for safety reason, I tried to find the strength but I couldn't."

"I had a great season, I wish all of you nothing but the best for the upcoming season."

Having joined as a free agent from Turkish club Konyaspor on a two-year deal last summer, Nzonzi made 34 appearances for Sepahan across all competitions, bagging three goals and an assist, as the Is-

fahan-based outfit finished runner-up to Tractor in the Iranian top-flight table, while crashing out of the Hazfi Cup quarterfinals and the group stage of the AFC Champions League Two.

Sepahan's new season will begin with a visit to Al Duhail of Qatar on Aug. 12, where a place in West's league phase of the AFC Champions League Elite will be on the line at the Khalifa International Stadium. Sepahan has made six signings during the summer transfer window – including former Iran skipper Ehsan Hajsafi, goalkeeper Mohammadreza Akhbari, and ex-Esteghlal midfielder Arash Rezavand – while Omid Nourafkan is back in the squad following a loan spell at Malavan.

Arsenal manager Arteta pleased with
early transfer business

REUTERS – Mikel Arteta said he was happy that Arsenal had signed a number of top-quality players in the early stages of the transfer window, and that they had given the Premier League club impetus to raise their level in the coming season.

Runners-up for the last three seasons, Arsenal have signed winger Noni Madueke and goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga from Chelsea, as well as midfielders Christian Norgaard from Brentford and Martin Zubimendi from Real Sociedad.

"They bring new excitement, a new energy as well," Arteta told reporters in Singapore on Monday ahead of a pre-season match against Serie A side AC Milan.

"We signed very important players as well. Again, everybody feels like their height has to go to a different level, and that's what we're seeking," he added.

"Ideally, you want it (transfers) done on day one in pre-season. We've done very, very well so far. I'm very pleased with the way the club is supporting the necessities and improvements that we required in the team." Swedish striker Viktor Gyokeres, who scored 54 goals in 52 games for Sporting last season, is also expected to move to the Emirates Stadium.

"There's still a long time in the window, and we are seeking. In terms of numbers, we are short, and we have to improve the depth and the quality of the squad," Arteta added.

"We are constantly looking in the market, but until that happens, I can focus on the players that we actually have, work with them, and I'm very pleased with what I've seen so far in the first 10-15 days." Arteta briefly spoke about former player Thomas Partey, who was charged with rape and sexual assault this month, after leaving the club at the end of last season. "I think the club was very clear in its statement. There are a lot of legal matters that are very complicated so I cannot comment on any of that," Arteta said.

Asked if he felt like the club had followed the right processes in dealing with the issue, he replied: "100%, yes."

Arsenal have let Premier League

titles slip through their grasp in the last couple of years but this season will be different, defender Gabriel Magalhaes said.

"I think the players that came will help us out a lot. The club is doing what is best for the players and the manager," Gabriel told the BBC in an interview published on Sunday.

"We want to have the best players. To be in the dispute for titles, you have to have the best players ... We have let a couple of titles slip through our fingers recently. We almost won but I think this year, things will be different."

Arsenal begin their 2025-26 Premier League campaign on August 17 with a trip to Manchester United.



● varzesh3.com

● JOHN SIBLEY/ACTION IMAGES



Manal Bafi of Bafq; an ancient craft at risk of extinction



yazdcity.ir



yazdcity.ir

Iranica Desk

Among the cities of Yazd Province, Bafq is renowned for having the highest number of date palms. As such, its product — Bafq dates — has long been considered one of the region's characteristic features. Not so long ago, the presence of 400,000 date palms in Bafq not only reflected the agricultural sector's focus on date production but also indicated that this tree has numerous uses for the local population. A large portion of the region's products and handicrafts are directly related to different parts of this tree. Examples include fan weaving, various types of mats, brooms, door mats, and other similar items.

Utilization of date palm parts

The diversity and extent of utilization of different parts of this tree are so remarkable that the region's handicrafts can truly be regarded as an inseparable extension of the products of this tree. Fans are woven from its leaves and fiber; the twigs of its branches are used to make handles for fans; its tough fibers are woven into mats; and the same parts are also employed to weave ropes or, locally, Manal Bafi (Manal weaving), chn.ir wrote.

Cultural significance

Overall, besides the reliance of the region's handicrafts on date palm products, this craft has historically prompted local people to hold ceremonies for seed planting and the ceremonial planting of date palms. Manal Bafi signifies the optimal use of the date palm, and it is also considered a vital pillar supporting other local handicrafts in Bafq. Regarding its applications, it is worth noting that the spun fibers of the date palm are used as strong ropes for descending into wells, climbing date palms to harvest fruit, weaving door mats, making ropes for plastering, and, more recently, primarily for securing vine trellises and various other purposes.



otaghak.com

Raw materials

As mentioned in the initial description of the topic, the raw material for Manal is obtained from the tough fibers of the date palm trunk, locally known as Sis. After separating the Sis from the tree, which grows around it in ring-like formations, it is soaked for washing and to increase its flexibility.

Process of making Manal

Once the bundles of Sis are prepared, depending on the desired type of thread (considering thickness and thinness) and the length of the final strand needed, some of the main Sis is separated and rubbed on a board to form a half-rope. This process is locally called Falteh Kardan (similar to making a spun filament). The number of Falteh pieces varies depending on the final required length of the rope.

Since the length of the rope is determined by the Manal weaver, it can range from a hundred meters up to a thousand meters. Usually, from a bundle weighing

five to six kilograms, about one hundred meters of Manal can be produced. After preparing the Falteh of the required length, they are hand-twisted repeatedly until all pieces are woven into a single rope.

Final stages

In the final stage, after the Falteh has been woven into a rope, it is wound into a ball-like shape and soaked in water to prevent brittleness. Then, it is unrolled and placed between two long nails set at a certain distance apart. To finalize, it is twisted again to strengthen the Manal. It is important to note that all these steps are done manually, and because Sis is a tough material, twisting the Falteh is a laborious task.

Duration, durability and variations

In total, depending on the skill of the craftsmen, weaving one hundred meters of Manal takes between one to two hours. The resulting rope is not only highly

durable but, depending on its purpose, the diameter of the Manal can be varied by adjusting the number of Falteh. For example, the Manal used for making palm climbing ropes is thicker, while the one used for weaving fans or door mats is thinner.

Significance and modern challenges

Considering Bafq's reputation as a date-producing region of Yazd, alongside handicrafts related to the date palm tree, Manal weaving has held significance for two main reasons since ancient times: first, as a material for other related handicraft products, and second, as a standalone product — ropes used by workers for climbing dates, plastering, and various other purposes.

Reflection of traditional life

Manal weaving can be seen as a reflection of the optimal exploitation of the environment and surrounding trees, a concept rooted in traditional life.

This world, alongside handicrafts, food, and clothing, represented a broad scope of domestic production stemming from the raw materials available in each region.

Economic role

This handicraft industry exemplifies the efficient use of the date palm, which is most abundant in Bafq. Moreover, it is regarded as a vital support for other local industries. Due to the widespread presence of date palms in Bafq, this craft is practiced in most households throughout the county. Although, in the past, due to the demands of the time, the use of locally available materials was largely self-sufficient, and utilization of natural surroundings with less vulnerability was common, like many other traditional industries — such as food and clothing — Manal weaving now faces the threat of extinction. In fact, compared to other handicrafts like fan weaving (Badbezan Bafi) which has preserved its name and iden-

tity more prominently within the region, Manal weaving has experienced a decline.

Revival efforts

Considering that this craft has not been widely popular in recent years and has gradually been forgotten, talented artisans from Bafq have been working to revive it by combining this art with other local handicraft traditions to produce new and practical items such as hangers, sugar bowls, nut dishes, and more.

The skill of Manal weaving was officially registered as an intangible cultural heritage in July 2020.

Bafq's geographical and climatic context

Bafq is a city situated in the central-eastern part of Yazd Province. Nestled in a semi-arid region characterized by vast plains and rugged mountains, Bafq is known for its strategic position along important trade routes and its proximity to mineral-rich areas. Its geographical location makes it a significant hub for both agriculture and industry within the region. The city's landscape is dominated by barren deserts and rocky terrains, reflecting its arid environment.

Climate characteristics

The climate of Bafq is classified as desert climate, with extremely hot summers and mild, cool winters. During the summer months, temperatures can soar well above 40°C, often creating harsh conditions that challenge agricultural activities. Winters, on the other hand, are relatively short and mild, with temperatures dropping to around 10°C during the coldest nights. Rainfall is sparse and irregular, contributing to the dryness of the region and influencing the traditional agricultural practices centered around drought-resistant crops like date palms. The resilience of the local people and their ability to adapt to these environmental conditions are reflected in their innovative utilization of natural resources, notably the date palm, which thrives despite the challenging climate.



Pezeshkian urges urgent action amid worsening water crisis

Social Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday said the country's water crisis, especially in Tehran, is "more serious than widely discussed," calling for swift and coordinated action to avert long-term damage. Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting addressing provincial governors, a day after cabinet meeting in Tehran, at a national conference focused on decentralization and local governance. Together, the back-to-back meetings laid out the government's push for stronger public engagement, administrative reform, and coordinated crisis response, president.ir reported. "Without immediate planning, we'll soon face a situation that cannot be reversed," Pezeshkian said, citing a report by the Energy Ministry on falling reserves and severe supply imbalance in

the capital. "This issue is not about nature. It stems from past decisions. And now we must correct our course with precision and accountability." The president stressed that water consumption must be curbed alongside long-term supply planning. He warned that simply diverting water from other regions to Tehran would not solve the core challenge. He also urged a freeze on expansion plans for water-intensive industries in the capital. "If we don't act quickly, the entire region will be hit by a deeper crisis," he said. Pezeshkian addressed governors from across Iran in a nationwide summit at the Interior Ministry, where he reiterated his government's commitment to devolving power and responsibilities to local officials. "Delegation of authority is the right move—and we will not back away from it," he said. "Yes, we may hit some

bumps along the way, but we'll fix them through cooperation and coordination." Highlighting lessons from the recent 12-day war with Israel, the president praised what he called "exceptional leadership" by Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and spontaneous public mobilization. He pointed to how communities, especially in healthcare, volunteered during the crisis, offering "rare displays of sacrifice and unity." Pezeshkian called on governors to serve as "presidents of their provinces," urging them to move fast, understand local needs, and harness grassroots capacities. He said the key to development is justice in appointments, respect for roles, and inclusion of all groups, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or belief. Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni, who opened the Monday session, said the



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) speaks at a meeting with provincial governors in Tehran, July 21, 2025.
● president.ir

administration's neighborhood-focused approach had proven effective during the conflict and should serve as a roadmap for crisis management moving forward. "The power of local institutions—mosques, civil organizations, and volunteers—

showed us how to push through in the toughest of moments," he said. The water situation remains critical across the country. According to Isa Bozorgzadeh, spokesperson for Iran's water industry, 50 cities in 24 provinces are now expe-

riencing water stress. Only 21% of Tehran's dam capacity is currently full, and half of that is lost to sediment. He urged residents to cut consumption by at least 25% to avoid supply disruptions. Bozorgzadeh added that 1,200 critical connections—

such as hospitals—have already been fitted with emergency storage systems, and upgrades to water control infrastructure are underway. He warned that without proper consumption management, the situation would directly affect water availability and public welfare in Tehran and Alborz provinces, urging citizens to consider the conditions and help the country get through the crisis. "We ask citizens to immediately report any pressure drops or outages through the 122 hotline so we can address them quickly," he said. The president emphasized the need for clear public communication, future-oriented policymaking, and cross-sector collaboration to overcome the growing water challenge. "This is a national task," he said. "Both the government and the people must stand together."

National broadcaster commemorates media staff fallen in Israeli aggression

The Sobh Media Center held a commemorative ceremony on Sunday honoring journalists martyred in recent Israeli aggression against Iran. The event was attended by the families of the martyred journalists, along with 15 foreign journalists currently visiting Iran at the invitation of the Sobh Media Center. The ceremony was also attended by IRIB President Peyman Jabelli as the chief guest and IRIB World Service Director Ahmad Noroozi delivered the keynote address. Both Jabelli and Noroozi expressed their deep admiration for the bravery and dedication of the fallen journalists in Tehran and Gaza, Press TV reported. Noroozi stated that the shaken Israeli regime has shown it will do whatever is in its power—even commit all kinds of war crimes—just to survive. Jabelli also said the voice of truth cannot be silenced by the Zionist entity, praising all those who stood on the right side of history, alongside truth and righteousness. Veteran filmmaker Ahmad Reza Darvish presented IRIB anchor Sahar Emami with his Crystal Simorgh Award for her extraordinary bravery during the Israeli aggression on IRIB on June 16. At the time of the strike, Emami was delivering a live broadcast covering Israel's military aggression against Iran. Despite the tremors from the first blast, she continued the broadcast uninterrupted. During the ceremony, the Sahar Emami Special Award of the Sobh Media Festival was unveiled and presented to Hooman Khalili, newsroom manager at IRIB. Speaking to Press TV, Emami pointed out that the Israeli regime is angry with all journalists and media outlets that report the truth about its aggressions, aiming to silence them through targeted attacks. American journalist Calla Walsh also highlighted that the US has directly facilitated the aggression against Iran, adding that Iran is being targeted because of its unwavering support for Palestine and resistance to Zionism.



Sahar Emami, IRIB anchor, receives an award during a commemorative ceremony honoring IRIB staff martyred in Israeli aggression hosted by Sobh Media Center, July 20, 2025.
● PRESS TV

On June 13, Israel launched a blatant and 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, healthcare centers, outreach facilities, and both residential neighborhoods and rural communities, inflicting widespread civilian harm. These attacks also caused over 1,000 civilian fatalities. In response, the Iranian armed forces, led by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), launched a powerful and unprecedented retaliatory campaign, Operation True Promise III, against the Israeli regime, using many of its domestically developed new-generation missiles for the first time. Hundreds of Iranian ballistic missiles and drones overwhelmed Israeli air defenses and struck key military, intelligence, industrial, energy, and R&D facilities across the occupied Palestinian territories. On June 24, the Israeli regime, isolated and abandoned, declared a unilateral halt to its aggression, announced on its behalf by US President Donald Trump.

'The Forgotten' shortlisted for Kolkata film award

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian documentary 'The Forgotten' has been shortlisted for the top documentary prize at the 4th World Film Festival Kolkata, organizers confirmed on Monday. The festival, held from August 15-21, will screen 37 films tackling "social and environmental concerns" from countries including Germany, Japan, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Portugal, Russia, and the United States, ILNA reported. Seven documentaries are in the running for the main non-fiction trophy, with 'The Forgotten' competing under the

direction of Saeed Nabi and Maryam Khadivi. Produced by Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's Media Trade, the dramatic documentary tells the story of Abdolkazem Saki, a decorated Paralympian and world champion. Living beside the Hoor al-Azim Wetland in Khuzestan, Saki maintains his daily physical training despite the wetlands' decline. Organisers said his "professional destiny mirrors the fate" of the marsh itself. IRIB Media Trade is handling the international distribution of the film. Three awards will be handed out by the festival's distin-



guished jury: best feature (60 minutes and above), best short (under 60 minutes), and best documentary (under 90 minutes). The screenings take place at Nandan, India's leading film center in Kolkata.

Iran's 'Black Scarf' on French festival silver screens as global acclaim builds

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film 'Black Scarf,' directed by Ali-reza Shahhosseini, was featured in the main competition of France's 14th Cinema Toward Freedom festival, which ran July 19-21 in the southern city of Toulon. The screening marks another international appearance for Shahhosseini's work, which has drawn increasing attention across Europe for its psychological depth and sharp narrative, according to ILNA. The film had earlier received the Special Jury Prize at Spain's DiversidArte Social Inclusion Festival, where judges called it "deeply moving" and "remarkably striking." Produced by Shahhosseini Film, an international production company, Black Scarf delivers a tense, metaphor-laden story centered around a chilling line: "Do you know anything about spiders? They eat their mates." The phrase, drawn from the official synopsis, underscores the film's



dark, emotional tone. The cast includes Pasha Rostami, Tara Majidzadeh, Lotfollah Seifi, Mahna Seyyedi, the late Hatem Mashmouli, Javad Falahatkar, Hasti Gharib, Iraj Abedi, Naser Marefat, Ebrahim Naji, and Arshia Cheraghi. In Spain, Shahhosseini donated his €500 prize to families affected by this year's 12-day war between Iran and Israel. The gesture, described by the filmmaker as a tribute to "martyrs and war veterans," has further elevated the film's profile and message.