

Iran celebrates cultural resilience, national unity through arts after Israeli aggression

8 >



Araghchi: Tehran ready for 'negotiated solution' to nuclear dispute

'Iran will not relinquish nuclear enrichment'

2 >



Pezeshkian decries int'l double standards on human rights

'Gov't ready for dialogue with dissident groups to solve problems'

2 >

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) poses for a family photo with party members of Iran's Reform Front following a meeting at the presidential office in Tehran on July 22, 2025. president.ir

Iran's expectation that China, Russia could help curb nuclear tensions is reasonable

By Nematollah Izadi
Iran's ex-ambassador to Russia

OPINION

Iran, with its extensive relations with China and Russia, has legitimate, political and friendly expectations of these nations. Both countries have woven broad ties globally and play key roles economically, politically and culturally. Russia now faces challenges with Europe and the US due to the Ukraine war, but it has maintained ties with Israel, even as it waged a 12-day aggression against Iran.

In past crises—such as the US invasion of Iraq—Russia repeatedly sent special envoys, due to its good relations with Iraq and concern about US operations. It was reasonable to expect similar initiatives in the recent war, given Russia's standing with both Iran and Israel. Even if driven by a desire to preserve its international standing, such engagement

would have been welcome—but it did not happen. Considering Tehran's extensive and friendly relations, expecting action from Moscow appears both logical and well-founded.

Regarding the mechanism to possibly snap back sanctions on Iran under the 2015 nuclear deal, it is often overlooked that China and Russia are also parties to the JCPOA, not only the three European states—Britain, France and Germany. Both nations were expected to lean on European counterparts to prevent snapback, especially as Iran—despite recent strikes—has stayed engaged in negotiations.

Iran has stated it stands ready to continue diplomacy, with the US signaling willingness too. The move by the European trio to trigger the snapback mechanism could derail this process. Therefore, a proactive role by Russia and China could help shore up the negotiating environment. [Page 2 >](#)

Farming soaks up 90% of Iran's precious water supply: Experts

DEBATE

4-5 >



Leader authorizes NDF support for oil output emergency plan, solar plant construction

3 >



Azmoun, Qayedi shortlisted for UAE league's Player of the Season

6 >



Great Wall of Gorgan represents an engineering masterpiece of Sassanid Empire

7 >

Araghchi: Tehran ready for 'negotiated solution' to nuclear dispute

'Iran will not relinquish nuclear enrichment'

International Desk

Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi said Tehran is ready for talks with the United States for a "negotiated solution to Iran's nuclear program."

In a 16-minute interview with Fox News which was aired on Monday, Araghchi said that Iran is "open to talks" with the US, but that they would not be direct talks "for the time being."

"If they [the US] are coming for a win-win solution, I am ready to engage with them," he said.

"We are ready to do any confidence-building measure needed to prove that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful and would remain peaceful forever, and Iran would never go for nuclear weapons, and in return, we expect them to lift the sanctions," the foreign minister added.

"So, my message to the United States is that let's go for a negotiated solution to Iran's nuclear program."

"There is a negotiated solution for our nuclear program. We have done it once in the past. We are ready to do it once again," Araghchi said.

However, he said that Tehran cannot give up on its uranium enrichment program, which the US has opposed during five rounds of negotiations between Tehran and Washington, which canceled following a last month aggression by the US and Israel against Iran.

The US strikes on June 22 hit three Iranian nuclear enrichment sites — Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan.

"It has now stopped because, yes, damages are serious and severe, but obviously, we cannot give up our enrichment because it is an achievement of our own scientists, and now, more than that, it is a question of national pride," Araghchi said. US President Donald Trump warned that the US could strike Iran's nuclear sites again "if necessary."

On his Truth Social platform, Trump ref-

erenced Araghchi's comments about the nuclear sites being severely damaged and said, "Of course they are, just like I said, and we will do it again, if necessary!"

Araghchi said that Iran's Atomic Energy Organization is still evaluating how the attacks had affected Iran's enriched material, adding that they will "soon inform" the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of its findings.

He said any request for the IAEA to send inspectors would be "carefully considered."

"We have not stopped our cooperation with the agency," he added.

IAEA inspectors left Iran after Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed a law suspending cooperation with the IAEA earlier this month.

Tehran had sharply criticized the IAEA and its chief, Rafael Grossi, over a June 12 resolution passed by the IAEA board accusing Tehran of non-compliance with its nuclear obligations.



Abbas Araghchi
IRNA

Iranian officials said the resolution was among the "excuses" that Israel used as a

pretext to launch its attacks, which began on June 13 and lasted for 12 days.

21 Palestinian children die of malnutrition, starvation in three days

UN chief brands Gaza as 'horror show'



AFP

The head of Gaza's largest hospital on Tuesday said 21 children died due to malnutrition and starvation in the Palestinian territory in the past three days, while Israel pressed a devastating assault.

Gaza's population of more than two million people is facing severe shortages of food and other essentials, with residents frequently killed as they try to collect humanitarian aid at a handful of distribution points. "Twenty-one children have died due to malnutrition and starvation in various areas across the Gaza Strip," Mohammed

Abu Salmiya, the director of Al-Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza, told reporters. Abu Salmiya told reporters that new cases of malnutrition and starvation were arriving at Gaza's remaining functioning hospitals "every moment." "We are heading towards alarming numbers of deaths due to the starvation inflicted on the people of Gaza," he added. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called Gaza a "horror show" in a speech on Tuesday, with "a level of death and destruction without parallel in recent times".

After talks to extend a six-week cease-

fire broke down, Israel imposed a full blockade on Gaza on March 2 this year, allowing nothing in until trucks were again permitted to enter at a trickle in late May. However, stocks accumulated during the cease-fire have gradually depleted, leaving the territory's inhabitants experiencing the worst shortages since the start of the war in October 2023.

Chaotic scenes have become frequent at aid distribution areas since the US- and Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation began overseeing aid operations. The UN on Tuesday said Israeli forces had killed over 1,000 Palestinians trying to get food aid since the GHF began its operations.

The head of the UN Palestinian Refugee Agency (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini said on Tuesday that its staff members as well as doctors and humanitarian workers are fainting on duty due to hunger and exhaustion.

Lazzarini described the situation in Gaza as "hell on earth", adding that nowhere was safe.

Most of Gaza's population has been displaced at least once during the Israel's onslaught on the Palestinian territory since 2023.

Israel's strikes on Gaza have killed more than 59,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, according to the health ministry in the territory.

Pezeshkian decries int'l double standards on human rights

'Gov't ready for dialogue with dissident groups to solve problems'

National Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday criticized international double standards toward human rights across the world, saying that, "Human rights and international organizations are nothing but a lie."

"Today, if we look at the situation of the children in Gaza, we see them dying of hunger before the eyes of the world. While there are organizations that claim to defend the rights of children and women, in reality, they do nothing," Pezeshkian said in a ceremony honoring the martyrs of Iraq's imposed war on Iran in 1980s.

Pointing to the dire situation of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the Iranian president, "In today's civilized world, right before everyone's eyes, they have cut off water and food to the oppressed people, women, and children in Gaza, committing genocide — Yet, they talk up human rights, while they themselves — from Gaza and Palestine to Lebanon, Syria, and Iran — have violated all international norms and human rights, committing crimes against humanity." Elsewhere in his remarks, Pezeshkian pointed to a recent aggression by Israel and the US against Iran last month, saying that they have attacked hospitals and residential areas, targeted women, children, and defenseless civilians un-



Masoud Pezeshkian
president.ir

der the pretext of Iran's development of nuclear weapon program, which he said "is nothing but a lie."

He emphasized that the enemies of the country do not want Iran to be strong and independent.

During a separate meeting with the members of the Reformist party, the Iranian president referred to the problems facing the country, saying that his government is open to hold talks with the dissident groups to resolve the problems.

"The government is ready to cooperate constructively with all forces. Today, we are even ready to engage in dialogue with the opposition based on equality, as the resolution of the country's problems requires a dialogue, not confrontation," he said.

Pezeshkian said that his government has inherited numerous problems, including water shortages.

Tehran says invoking snapback will complicate nuclear standoff

International Desk

Reimposing international sanctions on Iran would make the situation over its nuclear program more complex, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said on Tuesday.

The Iranian official made the remarks during a briefing meeting with representatives from more than 110 UN member states in New York on Monday.

The Iranian official was speaking ahead of a meeting on Friday with three European states known as the E3 — Britain, France and Germany.

The E3 said that if no progress is reached by the end of August over Iran's nuclear program, they will invoke a "snapback" mechanism — a process that would reimpose UN sanctions on Tehran that were lifted under a 2015 deal.

"We will express our position regard-

ing the E3's comments on the snapback mechanism, which we think lacks any legal ground," Gharibabadi said, referring to Friday's meeting in Istanbul.

"Nonetheless, our effort will be to see if we can find common solutions to manage the situation."

The three European countries, along with China and Russia, are the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal — from which the United States withdrew in 2018.

"It has been seven years that the nuclear deal is not being implemented by the Europeans following the US departure from it. How can they argue that Iran is not following the deal when they themselves have not done so?" Gharibabadi added.

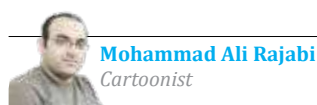
Tehran denies seeking a nuclear weapon and says its nuclear program is solely meant for civilian purposes. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Ara-



Kazem Gharibabadi

ghchi told his European counterparts Friday they have no grounds for reactivating UN sanctions.

"If EU/E3 want to have a role, they should act responsibly and put aside the worn-out policies of threat and pressure, including the 'snap-back' for which they (have) absolutely no moral (or) legal grounds," Araghchi said on X. The remarks came after Araghchi held a conference call with his British, French and German counterparts and European Union foreign policy chief Raja Kallas.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Leader authorizes NDF support for oil output emergency plan, solar plant construction

Economy Desk

The National Development Fund (NDF) announced its readiness to support the emergency plan for a daily increase of 250,000 barrels of oil production, following a permission issued by Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. After the Supreme Council of Economy's resolution in November, the permission has recently been granted by the Leader to the fund to invest its resources in the energy sector, Tasnim reported. Based on the NDF's correspondence, an investment ceiling of three billion dollars has been set for this sector. Following the Supreme Council of Economy's resolution and the request for permission from the Leader, an 80% share for this fund in implementing the emergency plan for a 250,000 barrel per day increase in crude oil production was issued. In light of the approval of the emergency plan for a 250,000 barrel per day oil increase, the NDF has announced its read-

iness to enter this plan, IRNA reported. Mehdi Ghazanfari, the chairman of the NDF's Board of Executives, during a board meeting on Tuesday, expressed special gratitude to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution for his trust. Ghazanfari, calling the permission significant and historic, said, "Based on this permission, the fund was authorized to invest in the energy sector, including oil, gas, and electricity." He added that, "This authorization not only upgraded the Fund's statute but also brought the Fund closer to its true role and position." "Accordingly, it was decided that the National Development Fund would invest in the 'Emergency Plan for a 250,000 Barrel per Day Increase in Crude Oil Production' and the 'Plan for Constructing 7,000 Megawatts of Solar Power Plants,'" he said, adding that based on the permission, "many more projects in this sector will be approved from now on." The chairman of the National Development Fund's Board of Executives characterized



the Leader's authorization as a kind of "conditional investment," saying, "The text of the contracts must be prepared as soon as possible, with special attention to the conditions stipulated in the Leader's authorization."

Describing the conditional investment, Ghazanfari stated, "In exchange for this authorization, four important conditions have been stipulated. First: The investment project must have economic justification. Second: The Fund's resources and suf-

ficient profit must be returned. Third: The Fund must not seek direct involvement in the management of the investment project. And fourth: The general framework of each project must be approved by the Supreme Council of Economy."

Iran's expectation that...

Even modest actions, if well-intentioned, would have a positive ripple effect. As close partners with full insight into Iran's peaceful nuclear pursuits, they could serve as its spokespersons and help manage the crisis. Iran's expectations are not misplaced—they are reasonable—and it is hoped these nations will honor their international responsibilities, even to preserve their own reputations. Given their permanent seats on the UN Security Council, and the global impact of the 12-day war, it was expected that Russia and China would step forward with meaningful initiatives. Iran exercised restraint, avoiding aggressive actions, and the conflict did not cause major disruption to global energy or oil markets. Yet China—by far the most affected by energy market disruption—could have done more. Their contributions should go beyond issuing blanket statements; they require solid legal foundations rooted in UN or IAEA documents. For example, since the JCPOA permits uranium enrichment by Iran at 3.67%, any proposal should be anchored in verified UN-backed frameworks and backed by practical measures—such as dispatching special envoys. The inaction of Russia and China, especially given their track record in mediation, was therefore perplexing.

There is no formal documentation to suggest that Russia or China oppose Iran's peaceful nuclear activities. In fact, both reap rewards—Russia is completing one nuclear reactor in Iran and building two more, and China has the capacity to take part. Their nuclear engagement in Iran is thus in their interest. The existing ambiguity about their stance on Iran's nuclear program likely stems from their lack of initiative following the US departure from the JCPOA. Transparent involvement from them would have dispelled these doubts.

In today's precarious ceasefire, with ongoing threats from Israel and the US, China's cautious approach and reluctance to offer military support to Iran are unsurprising. Even if arms deals exist, robust cooperation demands stability, clear contracts, and transparent trade mechanisms. Moreover, overreliance on just one or two nations—like China or Russia—could leave Iran vulnerable.

Iran's pre-Revolution industrial infrastructure was largely supplied by Europe, with deep collaboration involving European firms. Those ties have weakened, but they must be a priority in talks with the JCPOA's powerful European signatories. Sole dependence on China or Russia could restrict Iran's economic and political room for maneuver.

Domestic self-reliance has helped Iran in certain areas, but it remains inadequate. Accordingly, Iran needs to spread out its supply channels and avoid overreliance on any single partner. This broader strategy would empower Tehran to bargain from a position of strength in international dealings, shielding itself from undue economic and political pressure. Iranian officials must shape their policies accordingly to safeguard national interests.

President launches 'smartization project' for free trade zones



President Masoud Pezeshkian unveils the smartization project for Iran's free trade-industrial and special economic zones on July 21, 2025. president.ir

ital economy. The project is designed to gradually connect with other service chains, moving towards greater dynamism and impact. Its successful implementation could alter the strategic landscape of free zones in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the governance model in such areas, creating a hopeful and inspiring transformation in the fields of tourism and investment attraction. Organizing and smartening services, safeguarding public assets, ensuring transparency, enhancing managerial agility, creating a platform for implementing the Supreme Council's policies for free zones, and preventing the violation of citizens' rights are other outcomes of the project's successful execution.

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian unveiled three projects in smartization of free trade-industrial and special economic zones on Monday evening, introducing initiatives designed to transform tourism and investment attraction during a meeting of the Supreme Council of Free Zones. The three projects include the "Tourism Card System to facilitate purchases for foreign tourists," the "Tourism System for providing discounts to travelers in hotels and restaurants," and the "Cargo System

for appointment scheduling and online cargo tracking," IRNA reported. The projects, designed and implemented utilizing the capacity of knowledge-based companies and new technologies, represent a strategic step towards digital transformation, enhancing transparency, facilitating services, and countering sanctions. The implementation of the plan aligns with the macro policies of the Supreme Council and aims to transform the country's free zones into seventh-generation zones centered on a dig-

Minister urges maximum private sector role in national development

Economy Desk

Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd, emphasized the role of the private sector in the country's development, urging for the "maximum participation of the sector." During a ceremony marking the commencement of the construction phase of the Pardis-Haraz Freeway, Sadeq Malvajerd stated, "The path of the country's development will not happen except with the help, support, and maximum participation of the private sector," IRNA reported. "In the government, we are pursuing the gaining of the private sector's trust with greater seriousness," she added. Sadeq Malvajerd said, "In the domains of roads, railways, and ports, we also emphasize the necessity of bringing the private sector along with us and taking environmental considerations into account." "Regarding attracting investors and private sector capital, part of the objectives are achieved through productive utilization of land – and not by converting city gardens into tower gardens – but rather through productive utilization of lands that do not have environmental problems, in order



to achieve subsequent developments." Referring to freeway projects, she underlined, "Today, Tehran, due to the implementation of large-scale projects in past years without considering population issues and other factors, is turning into a defenseless city. By order of President (Masoud Pezeshkian), we will have a fundamental review regarding population concentration, the type of construction, and employment within the city and province of Tehran." "In this regard, access routes to Tehran and its surrounding cities must be facilitated so that we can gradually decentralize from the metropolis." Sadeq Malvajerd emphasized, "The construction of the Pardis-Haraz Freeway, which has begun with maximum private sector support, will have many positive effects on reducing fuel consumption and pollution, and resolving congestion on the route."

Science VP, ICT minister set roadmap for high-tech cooperation

Economy Desk

The Iranian vice president for science, technology and knowledge-based economy and the minister of information and communications technology (ICT) jointly charted a roadmap for future cooperation aimed at strengthening collaboration in the key domains of ar-

tificial intelligence, quantum, and cybersecurity. The joint meeting was held between Vice President for Science and Technology Hossein Afshin and Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sattar Hashemi with the goal of strengthening scientific and technological cooperation, IRNA reported.

The primary focus of the meeting was to chart a specific roadmap for future cooperation in key areas, including artificial intelligence, quantum, and cybersecurity. During the meeting, Afshin pointed to the proximity of the activity domains of the Science Vice-Presidency and the ICT Ministry, stating, "Both organizations

are striving to develop the country's knowledge-based economy and digital economy ecosystem." The vice president for science and technology further emphasized the importance of joint cooperation with the ICT Ministry in key areas, including ICT security, artificial intelligence and quantum.

Concluding his remarks, Afshin emphasized the science vice-presidency's desire for close cooperation with the ICT Ministry regarding knowledge-based digital economy companies and assessing their performance, stressing that the goal of the cooperation is to guide and provide targeted support to companies in future-oriented domains.

Farming soaks up 90% of Iran's precious water supply: *Experts*

DEBATE

In a segment of IRNA's *Talaaghi* (translation from Persian: *Convergence*) program, experts zeroed in on Iran's water crisis — particularly whether it has truly sunk in for everyone and whether the gravity of the situation has led to sound policies. The central question: "Why, in the midst of this crisis, do flawed and much-criticized water policies still drag on?"

To get to the bottom of this, the guests of the panel — with extensive experience and research to back them up — offered incisive and thought-provoking answers. Ghasem Taghizadeh Khamesi, former Iranian deputy minister of water and wastewater, ex-deputy mayor for urban development in Tehran, and previous general manager of water affairs in Tehran, attended the debate alongside Mohammad Fazeli, renowned Iranian sociologist who's carried out numerous studies across fields — and who brings hands-on experience from the Ministry of Energy's Socio-Cultural Water and Energy Center. The text of the first part of the debate follows:

In your opinion and given the current circumstances, has the water crisis in Iran truly hit home, and have our policies been adjusted accordingly? Or do we still fan the flames of this crisis in relevant sectors?

TAGHIZADEH KHAMESI: You've kicked off the discussion from exactly the right spot. The idea that "there is no water" or "there's very little water" simply hasn't taken root in our society. Why? The media bears some of the blame. If you keep an eye on state TV, a few drops of rain somewhere get splashed across the headlines as if the whole country's hit by floods — yet when there are six years of drought, barely a peep, or it's largely glossed over.

Governments have followed suit. I've worked with nearly every administration, except the current one, mainly in areas related to water, cities, these kinds of issues. Governments aren't keen on coming clean publicly that we have a water shortage. The only administration I've seen step up on this has been Dr. Pezeshkian's, which actually admits "there's no water." That's a positive — even this level of candor is progress.

I recall that right when the late president Raisi's government had not fully taken office but he'd been elected, we had two meetings with him. I told him, "Sir, brand your government as the 'Water Government'. If you talk about water, you're talking about service, welfare, and development — the real issue for people is water. You can build power plants to get electricity, but what are you going to do about renewable water?" Over the past 50 years, temperatures have gone up by 10 degrees, and rainfall has tailed off just as much — so has the available water. In 1973, we had 130 billion cubic meters of renewable water; Now, it's dropped to 103 billion. And in the next 8 to 10 years, that number could slip down to 95 or 96, which is barely what we consume.

We haven't put the brakes on agriculture. No real change has happened there. The minute someone brings up regulating wells, there's an outcry. For example, in the 11th administration, president Rouhani traveled somewhere and declared he was personally in charge of the nation's water — then nothing. President Ahmadinejad also once said: "Anyone who wants a well, give it to them." In that period, 300,000 illegal wells popped up. We used to have around 100,000. No one used to bother getting a license. Later, a law came in that whitewashed these illegal wells. Now, they talk about land subsidence. It's spread out of specific regions to become a much broader threat — just come, have a look at District 18 in Tehran, and you'll see for yourself. I'm worried this could eat into the heart of the city — jeopardizing bridges and buildings.

You can see the water situation for yourself. I'll expand on this later as it's extremely important. In the past 50 years, maybe only one year



has been as dire as this year — and this year's outlook is particularly grim, especially in Tehran, which is bearing the brunt of the crisis.

As Mr. Taghizadeh noted, the core issue is water scarcity. If that's the case, why are water-intensive industries still set up in the country's arid central regions? Why is our agriculture still so water-intensive? Why is our consumption pattern still so chaotic? Why hasn't water recycling and reuse gotten off the ground? We know — or at least many experts know — the solutions, but none are implemented. So, is there a real understanding of the crisis, or not? Why are choices still being made that simply don't add up in a water-short country?

FAZELI: To get a grip on Iran's water crisis, there are two or three key concepts and processes — if we lose sight of them, we fail to see the full picture. One is that water processes are slow to unfold; For example, it takes years for aquifers to drain, or for erosion and subsidence to really show up. Similarly, Iran's rainfall hasn't fallen off a cliff overnight; It's a gradual drop from 130 billion to about 100 billion cubic meters. Climate change often takes 30 to 40 years to work its way through so snow turns into rain — a shift that has drastic effects on the water system.

The quality of governance is tested by its capacity to grapple with these slowly evolving processes. In Iran, the system has largely failed to keep pace — be it water, earthquake risks in Tehran, air pollution, or soil erosion: They all follow this pattern.

Another big sticking point is water's cross-sectoral nature. Water is, perhaps, the most cross-sectoral problem the government faces. Effective management requires attention to drinking and sanitation water (sometimes split into separate systems), water for industry, agriculture, and the environment — the four main sectors.

Then, there's the split between surface and groundwater, each with quantity and quality dimensions. On top of that, there's unconventional water — recycled or reclaimed water — which also needs to feed into agriculture, industry, and urban systems. Multiple ministries are tangled up in this: Industry, Roads, Agriculture, Commerce, and so on. One of our system's biggest failings is that these agencies can't pull together. As a result, water management has been stuck in a rut over the past five to six decades — especially in the last three. Iran has gone from a low-water-use lifestyle (shaped by our historical and climatic wisdom) to water-heavy living. I once heard an old qanat digger from Yazd say something that really hit home; He

said, "I can't understand which fool changed our water unit from drop to billion cubic meters? That's fine for the Amazon, China, Europe, and Russia. In the Iranian plateau, our measurement should be the drop." That's where our understanding must take off — at least figuratively. Only then can we acknowledge our struggle to comprehend slow processes and the move from low to high water demand.

When I was at the Ministry of Energy, I came across a booklet from the early days of Tehran's urban water system. I still have a scanned version of it. It detailed how to talk people into using tap water instead of qanats and springs. They'd even listed water consumption standards by city. For instance, it showed exactly how much water a citizen of Shiraz, Tehran, or Mazandaran was supposed to consume each year. These numbers, tailored by region, varied; Shiraz was instructed to use less than Tehran, and Isfahan even less than Shiraz. People back then genuinely took stock of where they lived and the water scarcity they faced. Yet now, average water use has nearly doubled compared to those old figures — even though the national per capita water supply has fallen off. This shift is a dead giveaway that we've moved away from a low-water lifestyle to one fueled by heavy water use.

You may ask why agriculture or

industry isn't being reformed. After 50 or 60 years, our entire way of life — agriculture, industry, cities — has been built around resource-heavy consumption. It's simply not feasible to pull up stakes and move these industries from the country's center to the coast. Even countries with much stronger governance struggle with such changes because of conflicting interests; Millions of lives and livelihoods revolve around these entrenched structures. For instance, you can't just up and move the Esfahan Steel Complex to the seaside. These aren't just factories; They're economic and social chains holding communities together.

A crucial point, in my view, is that our system of governance has yet to face up to the slow-moving nature of water processes, or address the cross-sectoral nature of the crisis — again, because of conflicting interests. Water governance in Iran has a soft spot for flashy, high-cost, and largely ineffective solutions, most of them geared toward contractors.

From my two decades wrestling with water issues, I've found that any solution rooted in understanding slow processes, reducing consumption, adapting to climate, and resolving cross-sectoral hurdles simply doesn't get anywhere in the contractor-driven bureaucracy. Instead, off-base solutions, bloated and grandiose, that line the pockets of select groups, get pushed through and implemented.

So, you're saying Iran's water governance is "siloed" — not cross-sectoral?

FAZELI: Absolutely, it's fragmented. If the Iranian government were to admit that it has one glaring weakness — theoretically and practically — it would be on "cross-sectoral issues". So, water would be the most short-changed since it's among the most cross-sectoral issues out there.

TAGHIZADEH KHAMESI: Mr. Fazeli made an important point about the contractor-centric approach. I'd add two current, live



Ghasem Taghizadeh Khamesi (R), former Iranian deputy minister of water and wastewater, and Mohammad Fazeli (L), renowned Iranian sociologist, debate the current water crisis in Iran on July 14, 2025.

● IRNA



Iranian governments aren't keen on coming clean publicly that we have a water shortage. The only administration I've seen step up on this has been Dr. Pezeshkian's, which actually admits "there's no water." That's a positive — even this level of candor is progress.



The photo shows the alarmingly low water levels behind Latyan Dam, Tehran Province, Iran. It is one of the main sources of water for the Tehran metropolitan region.

● MOHAMMAD MEHDI GHAAHARI/ROKNA





The photo shows a deep-water well in the Sistan and Baluchestan Province, southeastern Iran, allegedly extracting groundwater from 3,000 meters below the surface on August 6, 2018.
● IRNA



A woman drinks water to cool herself off under Ahvaz's scorching +50°C sun — a daily struggle as Iran's water crisis deepens — on July 15, 2024.
● EBRAHIME JORFI/IRIB NEWS

cases — no need to dwell on the past. First is the so-called “deep water” issue, which you’ve surely heard about. At one point, they claimed there are billions of cubic meters of water underground just waiting to be tapped. When I was in office, we wrote a detailed letter to then-president Rouhani, warning that this claim was pure sloganeering, not backed by anyone credible in science.

FAZELI: Do you recall the figures, Mr. Taghizadeh? They said 1,000 billion cubic meters of water flow from the Hindu Kush, under our Sistan and Baluchestan Province, emptying into the Persian Gulf! Just to grasp the scale: the Karun River’s highest flow in the 1960s — its heyday — was around 24 billion cubic meters per year. Nowadays, after looking at the stats from the last decade (including the four or five years when I was out of the ministry), Karun’s annual inflow is maxed out at 14 to 20 billion cubic meters. Yet, here was a claim that 50 Karun Rivers worth of water are lurking underground from the Hindu Kush to the Persian Gulf! This was the brainchild of one MP, who proceeded to burn through billions of tomans drilling down to 3,000 meters, trying to extract this “deep water”. Worst of all, they managed to sell this story to senior officials, who bought into it.

How did they even settle for such a massive amount of water underground?

TAGHIZADEH KHAMESI: The story is lengthy. This “1,000 billion cubic meter” figure Mr. Fazeli mentioned is simply beyond comprehension. Here, everything’s measured in billions, so the real meaning gets lost. This number is 10 times the nation’s total renewable water supply! We sent the president a thorough letter to say that this was junk science. During Rouhani’s government, we didn’t let a single well get drilled for this purpose. They’d claim, for example, “We found 50 liters of water at 3,000 meters in Zabol,” even though you can hit water at 100 meters in the same spot. So why go down 3,000 meters?

So, they actually drilled down to 3,000 meters?

TAGHIZADEH KHAMESI: Yes, three wells were drilled as deep as 3,000 meters. During Rouhani’s administration, we held countless meetings and pushed back hard, even defending our stance in the Parliament. But once his government wrapped up and the late president Raisi took office, this project was resurrected. Who knows where these influential advocates come from, but again, letters poured in, new claims surfaced, and they even put together videos showing water gushing out of freshly drilled wells — as if that first spurt of every new well

proves anything. When Raisi’s government started, I stuck around for five or six months and kept resisting, but eventually, they managed to ram the project through. I’m not sure how much was spent — if I name a sum, I might be mistaken — but it was certainly a huge amount. In the end, the project was shut down and officials finally said, “There’s no water!” Exactly what we’d been saying from the outset.

So, they finally admitted there was no such water?

TAGHIZADEH KHAMESI: Yes. Back to Mr. Fazeli’s contractor point: Governments love to roll out new projects, rarely finishing what their predecessors left behind. This “deep water” drill was one of those. Another is the seawater transfer project — a saga in its own right.

And these water transfer schemes have had serious consequences for certain provinces.

TAGHIZADEH KHAMESI: That’s one of our biggest mistakes. I remember in the 1980s, pasta manufacturing was all the rage. Every official was pushing for factory permits. Back then, I was Khurasan’s deputy governor, and constantly fielded requests for such licenses. Fast forward, and now it’s the same with seawater. Governors would apply pressure for desalination permits, and sometimes the political heat was so intense we’d give in and issue the approvals. Afterwards, we’d ask, “Well, what’s the plan for this water?” Other countries were often invoked for comparison. “Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are taking water from the sea, so why shouldn’t we?” But these comparisons are off the mark. The UAE, for example, has virtually no domestic water resources, but Iran still has about 103 billion cubic meters of renewable water. If only 10% water savings come through in agriculture, we’d free up about 10 billion cubic meters while all the seawater projects combined yield maybe 300 to 400 million, and at what price? \$6

per cubic meter, plus enormous energy costs. They claim this water is meant for agriculture, but aren’t we supposed to be a “knowledge-based” country? How much of that knowledge has truly taken root in agriculture? Its results would be swiftly apparent; If it were ineffective, you’d see it the very next year — but nobody follows up. In my view, the main issue in our water crisis comes down to agricultural use. Expecting the public alone to cut down their use is, in my opinion, a red herring

Do you have precise figures on what percent of the country’s water is used for agriculture?

TAGHIZADEH KHAMESI: Only 7% of our water goes into industry and domestic consumption — let’s say 3% for industry and 4% for drinking. Some claim it’s up to 10%; Fine, let’s go with 10%. But 90% of our water is sucked up by agriculture. Some officials in agriculture don’t buy that. They say there’s a lot of loss in what they receive. My response: Once water flows into your canals, it’s yours — sort out your own network. But they keep saying there’s loss. Either way, that water is lost for good. We burn through 90% in agriculture and somehow pat ourselves on the back because we’ve grown watermelon or touted self-sufficiency in cucumbers — some of which we even export! There was a time when moving agricultural activities to neighboring water-rich countries was floated, but that ran into all sorts of roadblocks. My point is: The water used for drinking — about 7% of the total — actually has the potential for recycling. We’ve built decent treatment plants, but unfortunately, many have been shut down. I’d rather steer clear of pinning this on administrations as there’s no clear record as to which did what. But if anything is to be accomplished in water management, authorities must understand that by 2031, if climate holds steady, our water

use will catch up with our renewable water supply. This cannot be solved with slogans and talk alone. The country’s main headache is water, plain and simple. I don’t lose sleep over industry or drinking water as those can be managed. Agriculture is the real sticking point — we need to draw up crop patterns. Why grow rice in places lacking drinking water? It should be limited to Gilan Province and parts of Mazandaran Province. Sure, people in Golestan Province complain, “Why not us?” but reality is, rice farming only makes sense where annual rainfall is at least 500mm. Golestan Province doesn’t meet the mark.

Dr. Fazeli, frankly, I can’t figure out why, back in the 1960s, the deposed Shah of Iran chose Isfahan Province for the steelworks. But now that this whole network is in place, as you noted, it’s a nightmare to move. Still, for decades, Yazd Province has produced tiles and ceramics. With the current water situation, can’t these industries be relocated to regions with more water supply — down south or up north? Is there really no way out?

FAZELI: Personally, I’ve never conducted a direct study on how tough it would be to relocate these industries, nor how best to pull it off. But a couple of points need underscoring. The country’s main water crisis boils down to agriculture — cutting water use in farming is essential. Drinking water and industry, however, call for two separate notes. First, water use for drinking, industry, and agriculture varies widely from province to province and even between catchments. One region might allocate just 3% to industry and 8% for potable water, leaving 90% to agriculture. But the picture shifts if you zoom in on Tehran Province, particularly Tehran City. Here, agriculture and industry don’t soak up much — most water is channeled into drinking and sanitation. Take Isfahan Province and the

Zayandeh Rud Basin: When its dam was built about 60 years ago, just 60 million cubic meters out of a total 1.05 billion went to drinking water. Today, that’s shot up to about 460 million cubic meters — almost 50% now gets used for drinking and sanitation.

A key caveat: that 50% isn’t just surface water but mostly drawn from groundwater — around 5 to 6 billion cubic meters. Factoring in surface versus underground water is crucial for analysis. Water management must, at heart, be a local issue.

Nationwide, perhaps 3–4% of water is used in industry and 8–9% for drinking and health. Iran’s Seventh Development Plan estimates household water consumption at roughly 9 billion cubic meters (recent figures from the Water and Wastewater Company back this up). That’s the broad national picture, but ratios swing sharply by water basin. It’s worth adding: Unlike power, which you can generate in Khorasan and wire to Tehran, you just can’t pipe water around like that. Even if Khuzestan is awash in water, that doesn’t sort out Tehran’s shortage; Water isn’t like electricity, which you can transmit with cables.

But in practice, doesn’t the country transfer water with pipelines across regions?

FAZELI: This approach isn’t really an answer; It’s more of a contractor-driven move. At best, you can sometimes pipe water between adjacent basins. But tons of experts point out that inter-basin transfers often backfire, causing more harm than good. Each case needs individual scrutiny. In my 20–30 years in the trenches with water issues, one lesson’s clear: You simply can’t hand down a blanket verdict. Every area and every case comes with its own baggage.

So, in short, you don’t endorse inter-basin transfers?

FAZELI: That’s like asking whether a knife is good — it all comes down to intent and conditions. Transferring water between basins requires key prerequisites, none of which we’ve lived up to. To move water from Point A to Point B, you must be certain that every local efficiency measure, every drop saved, every price reform, and all loss reductions have already been acted on — and that the remaining gap is for drinking and health, not agriculture or industry. Only when all those boxes are ticked, and there’s still a critical shortfall, should transfer be considered — always taking onboard environmental, social, and win-win agreements between source and destination.

The full debate was first reported in Persian on IRNA.



Some comparisons are off the mark. The UAE, for example, has virtually no domestic water resources, but Iran still has about 103 billion cubic meters of renewable water. If only 10% water savings come through in agriculture, we’d free up about 10 billion cubic meters while all the seawater projects combined yield maybe 300 to 400 million, and at what price? \$6 per cubic meter, plus enormous energy costs.



The photo shows one of the three new treatment plants inaugurated in the presence of Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi in Tehran Province, Iran, on July 15, 2025.
● BORNA

Azmoun, Qayedí shortlisted for UAE league's Player of the Season



● football360.ir

Iranian international strikers Sardar Azmoun and Mahdi Qayedí have been named in the 10-man shortlist for the Emirati ADNOC Pro League Player of the Season. The 2024-25 UAE Pro League season concluded with Shabab Al Ahli securing a dominant title victory, while Sharjah and Al Wahda claimed second and third

place, respectively, earning spots in the AFC Champions League Elite. Al Wasl secured a place in the AFC Champions League Two, while Dibba Al Hisn and Al Urooba were relegated. As the league prepares for the new season, the UAE football association is set to announce the best performers of the past campaign.

Iranian duo among contenders

Ten players have been shortlisted for the Player of the Season award, with two Iranians making the list: Qayedí, the former Ittihad Kalba winger now with Al Nasr, and Azmoun, Shabab Al Ahli's striker. They will compete against Federico Cartabia (Shabab Al Ahli), Kod-

jo Laba (Al Ain), Omar Khribin (Al Wahda), Firas Ben Larbi (Sharjah), Nabil Fekir (Al Jazira), Fabio Lima (Al Wasl), Alejandro Romero (Al Ain), and Caio Lucas (Sharjah).

Second most influential player

Qayedí enjoyed his best season yet, finishing as Kalba's standout player with 16

goals and seven assists, directly contributing to 24 goals — the second-highest in the league, just behind Laba. The Iranian international was also the third-highest scorer and fourth-best assist provider, earning a move to Al Nasr Dubai. His presence in both the top scorers and assist charts strengthens his case

for the award.

Key figure for champions

Azmoun, who left European football to join Shabab Al Ahli last season, scored 11 goals and provided six assists in the league. Despite his contributions, his penalty misses prevented a higher tally. His teammate

Cartabia is also nominated but had fewer goal contributions, slightly improving Azmoun's chances. However, given the competition, Azmoun remains an outside contender for the award. The winner will be announced ahead of the new season, with Qayedí emerging as a strong favorite.

Iran national football team plans friendlies ahead of 2026 World Cup

Sport Desk

With less than a year remaining until the kickoff of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, Mehdi Taj, president of the Football Federation of Iran, unveiled the national team's prospective preparation schedule aimed at sharpening their competitive edge for the global tournament. Taj revealed that several friendly matches for Iran's national team prior to the World Cup have been tentatively finalized. The federation initially proposed friendlies against international squads including Chile, Japan, Costa Rica, South Korea, Australia, Ghana, and Cameroon. However, all these teams have declined Iran's invita-



● IRNA

tions, ISNA wrote. In light of this, if no alternative friendlies are arranged during the Iranian month of Shahrivar (late August to late September), Iran's team is expected to participate in the Central Asian Football Championship

(KAFA) 2025 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, from August 29 to September 5. Iran is drawn into Group B, where it will face Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Malaysia. Should Iran manage to schedule a friendly match during Shahrivar, the feder-

ation intends for the Iranian under-23 national team to compete in the KAFA Championship instead. Looking ahead, Iran is confirmed to play a friendly against Russia on October 14, with another friendly slated for October 6, al-

though the opposing team for that date remains undecided. In November, the Iranian team is expected to participate in a tournament in Ivory Coast, pending final confirmation. While no friendlies have been arranged for March,

the federation continues to actively pursue suitable opponents. Finally, Taj announced that in June, Iran will face one of the World Cup participants in a match planned to take place in the United States. The 2026 FIFA World Cup

is set to be a landmark event as it will be jointly hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico — the first time the tournament is hosted by three nations. This edition will also feature an expanded format, increasing the number of teams from 32 to 48. Iran has a history of consistent World Cup appearances and is eager to build on its reputation in the 2026 tournament. The extended format provides an excellent opportunity for the team to achieve historic milestones. With diverse and potentially stronger competition in the expanded field, thorough preparation through friendlies and tournaments is crucial for Iran to adapt tactics, analyze rivals, and build team cohesion.

Rashidi shines as Iran U16 beats Syria in WABA qualifiers

Sport Desk

The Iranian under-16 boys' basketball team secured a victory against Syria in their second match of the FIBA U16 Asia Cup WABA Qualifiers in Jordan on Monday, winning 86-81. Iranian players dominated the first and third quarters with scores of 17-7 and 38-25, respectively, but were defeated in the other two quarters with scores of 11-26 and 20-23, mehrnews.com wrote. This win comes after their opening game, where the Iranian team faced Lebanon



● iribfir

and was defeated with a score of 84-70. Alireza Rashidi was named the best player of the match against

Syria, scoring 33 points along with 4 rebounds, 3 assists, 3 steals, and an efficiency rating of 29.

The FIBA U16 Asia Cup WABA Qualifiers are a critical sub-regional tournament within the West Asian

Basketball Association (WABA) zone, designed to determine which Under-16 teams from West Asia advance to the main FIBA U16 Asia Cup. These qualifiers provide a platform for youth teams in the region to showcase emerging talent, gain international experience, and compete for a place in the continental championship. The 2025 edition of the FIBA U16 Asia Cup serves as a major youth basketball event in Asia, continuing the tradition of fostering basketball development across the continent.

Iranian players excel as VNL preliminary phase wraps up

Sport Desk

The Preliminary Phase of the Volleyball Nations League (VNL) 2025 has drawn to a close, with Brazil, Poland, Italy, France, Japan, Cuba, and Slovenia securing their spots in the tournament's Finals. The Iranian national team, under the guidance of coach, displayed a significantly improved performance compared to previous years. They secured six victories, ultimately finishing in eighth place overall in the preliminary standings. Beyond the team's overall standing, several Iranian players



● varzesh3.com

delivered impressive individual statistics throughout the preliminary round. Arshia Behnejad, a pivotal player for Iran, distinguished himself by ranking fourth among the best set-

ters. Another top player was Morteza Sharifi who showcased his all-around talent, securing the third position among the best servers and also placing eighth among the best receivers.

Great Wall of Gorgan represents an engineering masterpiece of Sassanid Empire



● akharinkhabar.ir



● tariniha.ir



● tariniha.ir



● IRNA

Iranica Desk

The Great Wall of Gorgan stands as a symbol of military engineering and water resource management from the Sassanid Period. July 20 marks the 26th anniversary of its registration as a national heritage site. This remarkable structure not only serves as a lasting testament to the technical knowledge of ancient Iranians but also holds the potential for global recognition. Alireza Salari, an archaeologist specializing in the Great Wall of Gorgan, remarked, “In the fertile plains and challenging borders of northeastern Iran, a structure has risen that for centuries has testified to the strength, order, and ingenuity of Iranians in defending their borders.”

Global ranking

With a length of approximately 200 kilometers, the Great Wall of Gorgan is the third-largest defensive wall in the world, after the Great Wall of China and the Limes Wall of Germany. Yet, on its 26th anniversary of national registration, it remains relatively lesser-known on the global stage, chtn.ir wrote. Built during the reign of the Sassanid Empire, from Yazdegerd II to Khosrow I (Anushirvan the Just), this wall was designed to defend against invasions by Central Asian nomadic tribes. It exemplifies the integration of military engineering and water management in ancient Iran. The primary construction material is adobe bricks, and the wall extends east to west, stretching from the Bileh Kuh mountains to the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea.

Historical references

The name “Great Wall of Gorgan” derives from historical

documents and underscores the significance of the ancient province of Gorgan in Iran’s political and military history. In various sources, it is also known by other names such as the Alexander Dam, Pirooz Dam, Anushirvan Dam, and Qezel Alan.

Structural features

The sophisticated and complex structure of the wall and its associated facilities reflect the ingenuity and wisdom of Sassanid engineers. The Gorganrud River played a critical role not only in the placement of the wall but also in supplying water for the moats, fortresses, and brick production. The land’s slope from east to west influenced the design, resulting in an integrated system of moats, dams, water channels, brick kilns, and the utilization of soil from the Gorgan plain for brick-making — demonstrating a coordinated and purposeful resource management system.

Water management systems

A key component of this defensive system is the main moat, which extends approximately 175 kilometers, with an average width of 30 meters and a depth of three to five meters, mostly designed to be filled with water. Additionally, channels built from the Gorganrud River transported water to the moats, fortresses, and brick workshops, indicating advanced water engineering practices in this region. The Garkaz Dam is another testament to this engineering prowess. This earthen dam, about 1,000 meters long and 20 meters high, was constructed to direct water into the wall’s moat. Today, parts of it have been destroyed by past floods, and its remnants lie buried in the bed



● tariniha.ir

of the Gorganrud River.

Brick kilns and defensive structures

Brick kilns, located alongside the wall, forts, and city castles, were designed as rectangular structures approximately 10 by six meters in size. These kilns, built with great precision using soil from the moats, produced high-quality bricks — many of which remain usable centuries later.

Urban planning

These city fortresses not only provided military support but also ensured the security and well-being of the local population — including merchants, farmers, and artisans. Their spatial layout encompassed residential, military, industrial, and commercial zones with diverse geometries. Remnants of their architecture can still be seen in the southern regions of the wall.

Construction excellence

Despite the passage of centuries, this wall remains one of the unmatched symbols of engineering and urban planning excellence in ancient Iranian civilization. The meticulous arrangement of large, heavy bricks and stones, the use of highly durable mortars, and the careful selection of routes to enhance both military and natural advantages all demonstrate a profound understanding of geography, climate, and military engineering by its designers. Even the topographical utilization — guiding the wall from the eastern highlands to the lower western lands — attests to this expertise.

Water resources

Studies of the existing fortresses along the wall reveal that each played a specific role in supporting the overall defensive system. An equally important aspect is the link between the wall and the surrounding water resources. The construction of dams, such as the historic Garkaz Dam — featuring a massive structure measuring 1,000 meters in length, 20 meters in height, and 30 meters in width — illustrates the emphasis on water supply and storage for the inhabitants and soldiers. These projects, along with the construction of moats extending

over 175 kilometers, served as crucial tools for enemy control and natural resource management.

Historical timeline

Furthermore, examining the sequence of the wall’s construction and the roles of various Sassanid kings provides insight into this multi-phase, national project. Initiated during Yazdegerd II’s reign, expanded under Pirooz Shah, and completed during the reign of Khosrow Anushirvan, the longevity of this endeavor underscores its importance for the Sassanid Empire. The involvement of three different monarchs, each mobilizing resources across different eras, reflects their ongoing concern about border threats and their dedication to reinforcing eastern defenses.

National heritage

The Great Wall of Gorgan was registered as a national heritage site of Iran on July 20, 1999. This recognition was an essential step in safeguarding one of the most magnificent relics of ancient Iran. However, what is needed now is to develop a comprehensive management plan for this historic site and actively pursue its inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The grandeur of the Great Wall of Gorgan now offers a promising foundation for sustainable tourism development and the revitalization of Golestan Province’s cultural identity. This Sassanid monument deserves not only to be cherished nationally but also to be recognized internationally — shining on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a testament to the power, wisdom, and engineering artistry of our ancestors in defending their homeland’s borders.



Iran celebrates cultural resilience, national unity through arts after Israeli aggression

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, said Tuesday that the country remains in a "perpetual state of historical readiness," during a ceremony in Tehran commemorating those in culture and media whose legacy inspired unity during the recent Israeli imposed war. The event, titled 'Forever Iran,' was held at Vahdat Hall and brought together senior officials, prominent artists, and the families of the deceased, IRNA reported. President Masoud Pezeshkian was also in attendance, stressing the government's public commitment to cultural resilience. The program paid tribute to the lives and legacies of artists, musicians, writers, and media workers who, in Salehi's words, "stood their ground in the face of adversity and remained the voice of the nation." The ceremony served not only as a memorial but as a wider assertion of Iran's identity as a civilization deeply rooted in spiritual heritage, literary ex-

pression, and collective memory. "Iran is not merely a name on a map," Salehi said. "It is a historic crossroads, a corridor through which the world's oldest civilizations have passed—and it is never caught off guard." He described Iran's past as a mix of "heroic sagas and mystical traditions," which together have shaped what he called a "remarkable cultural synthesis." Salehi said foreign powers had misjudged the nation's response during the recent war. "They thought the people would fold. But our story is not written in dust. It cannot be chopped down with a single axe," he said, invoking Iran's endurance in the face of repeated invasions throughout history. According to polling referenced by the minister, 83 percent of Iranians in 2023 expressed high or very high pride in their national identity. "That sense of belonging is not accidental," he said. "It's carved from centuries of shared history, from poems and songs, from resistance and renewal."



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi speaks during a ceremony titled 'Forever Iran' in Tehran on July 22, 2025.

● IRNA

Speaking on the sidelines of the ceremony, Deputy Culture Minister Naderah Rezaei praised what she described as the "envy-inducing" solidarity shown by artists during the war. "From the very first hours, artists responded on their own initiative," she said. "Whether online or on the streets, they kept the spirit of the people alive—through music, performance, and visual art." She noted that artists inside and outside Iran created works spontaneously, driven by what she called a "deep concern for Iran." Rezaei added that the ministry's arts division, in collaboration with the Cinema Organization of Iran, intends to support future productions focused on the 12-day war, saying that "there is still much to document and convey." She emphasized the importance of



completing the narrative through films and cultural storytelling, to honor what the nation endured and the "great talents it lost." 'Forever Iran' also recognized the sacrifices made by the families of martyred artists, journalists, and cultural workers. Organizers described the

event as a "gesture of national gratitude," aimed at reinforcing the role of the arts in maintaining collective resilience. "Our cultural memory is long," Salehi concluded. "And those who give their lives to keep it alive will forever remain part of that living memory."

Iranian director Naderi honored at Armenia's Golden Apricot Film Festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Three celebrated works by Iranian filmmaker Amir Naderi were screened at the 22nd Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival in Armenia, which wrapped up on July 20, organizers said. According to the Institute for the

Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Naderi's classics 'The Runner,' 'Harmonica,' and 'Waiting' were shown on July 14, 16, and 18, respectively, at the Red Hall of Moscow Cinema, IRNA reported. The screenings attracted large audiences and marked a significant

return of the director's early cinematic achievements to the regional spotlight. This year's edition of the festival, held from July 13 to 20 in the Armenian capital, also featured Naderi in a leading role off-screen—as the head of the Regional Panorama competition jury. During the closing ceremony, he was awarded the Parajanov Award for Lifetime Achievement, honoring what the festival called his "outstanding contribution" to world cinema. The festival, named after the symbolic Armenian fruit, is a prominent platform for showcasing regional and international cinema. It has become known for fostering cultural dialogue and promoting artistic excellence across borders.

Iran's 'They Loved Me' to compete at Shimla festival in India

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian feature 'They Loved Me,' directed by Mohammad Reza Rahmani, was officially selected for the competition section of the 11th International Film Festival of Shimla, set to take place from September 5 to 7, in the Indian city of Shimla, the capital of Himachal Pradesh. This is the second international screening of the film this year following its inclusion in Portugal's Avanca Film Festival. The Shimla event is recognized as one of India's distinct cultural showcases, supported by the Himalayan Velocity Tourism Organization and the Himachal Pradesh Department of Language and Culture. The festival highlights independent and culturally rooted cinema across fiction, documentary, short, and animated formats, ILNA reported. 'They Loved Me' features an ensemble cast including Amirhossein Arman, Amir



Jafari, Shahram Qaedi, Nasim Adabi, Ali Salehi, Hadi Taslimi, Iraj Rahmani, Leila Boloukat, and several emerging talents such as Mahsa Esmaeili, Sina Ghaffari, and Shilan Madani. Executive producer and financier Iraj Rahmani backed the film's production, while international distribution is being handled by Minerva Film, led by Elaheh Goodarzi.

Trump pulls US out of UNESCO for second time

President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the UN culture and education agency UNESCO on Tuesday, repeating a move he had already ordered during his first term, which had been reversed under Joe Biden. The withdrawal from the Paris-based agency, which was founded after World War Two to promote peace through international cooperation in education, science, and culture, will take effect on December 31, 2026, Reuters reported. "President Trump has decided to withdraw the United States from UNESCO – which supports woke, divisive cultural and social causes that are totally out-of-step with the commonsense policies that Americans voted for in November," White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said.

The State Department said remaining in UNESCO was not in the national interest, accusing it of having "a globalist, ideological agenda for international development at odds with our America First foreign policy". UNESCO chief Audrey Azoulay said she deeply regretted Trump's decision, but that it was "expected, and UNESCO has prepared for it". President Emanuel Macron wrote on X: "Unwavering support for UNESCO, universal protector of science, the ocean, education, culture, and world heritage." "The withdrawal of the United States will not weaken our commitment to those who are fighting this battle." The agency had diversified its sources of funding, receiving



only about 8% of its budget from Washington, she said. UNESCO was one of several international bodies Trump withdrew from during his first term, along with the World Health Organization, the Paris Agreement global climate change accord and the UN Human Rights

Council. During his second term, he has largely reinstated those steps. UNESCO officials said the US withdrawal would have some limited impact on programs the United States was financing. Israel welcomed the US decision to quit UNESCO.

The US State Department said one of the reasons for the withdrawal was UNESCO's decision to admit Palestine as a member state, which was "contrary to US policy and contributed to the proliferation of anti-Israel rhetoric within the organization." UNESCO officials said all relevant agency statements had been agreed with both Israel and the Palestinians over the past eight years. "The reasons put forward by the United States to withdraw from the organization are the same as seven years ago even though the situation has changed profoundly, political tensions have receded, and UNESCO today constitutes a rare forum for consensus on concrete and action-oriented multilateralism," Azoulay said. Diplomats said it was felt at UN-

ESCO that the withdrawal was inevitable for political reasons, given that Biden had brought the US back and had promised to repay arrears from the first time Trump pulled out. UNESCO, whose full name is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is best known for designating World Heritage Sites, including the Grand Canyon in the United States and the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria. The United States initially joined UNESCO at its founding in 1945 but withdrew for the first time in 1984 in protest against alleged financial mismanagement and perceived anti-US bias, returning in 2003 under President George W. Bush, who said the agency had undertaken needed reforms.