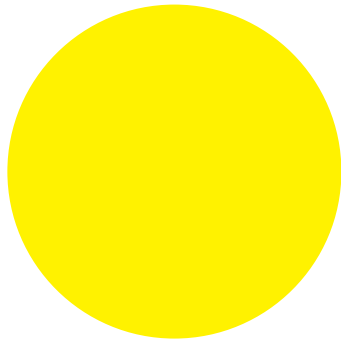




Pezeshkian: Unprecedented efforts underway to end Tehran water crisis
300 mcm of water to be transferred annually to Alborz, Tehran via Taleqan Dam



Iran, E3 agree to continue nuclear talks to resolve disputes: *Deputy FM*

IAEA chief says Tehran ready to restart technical conversations



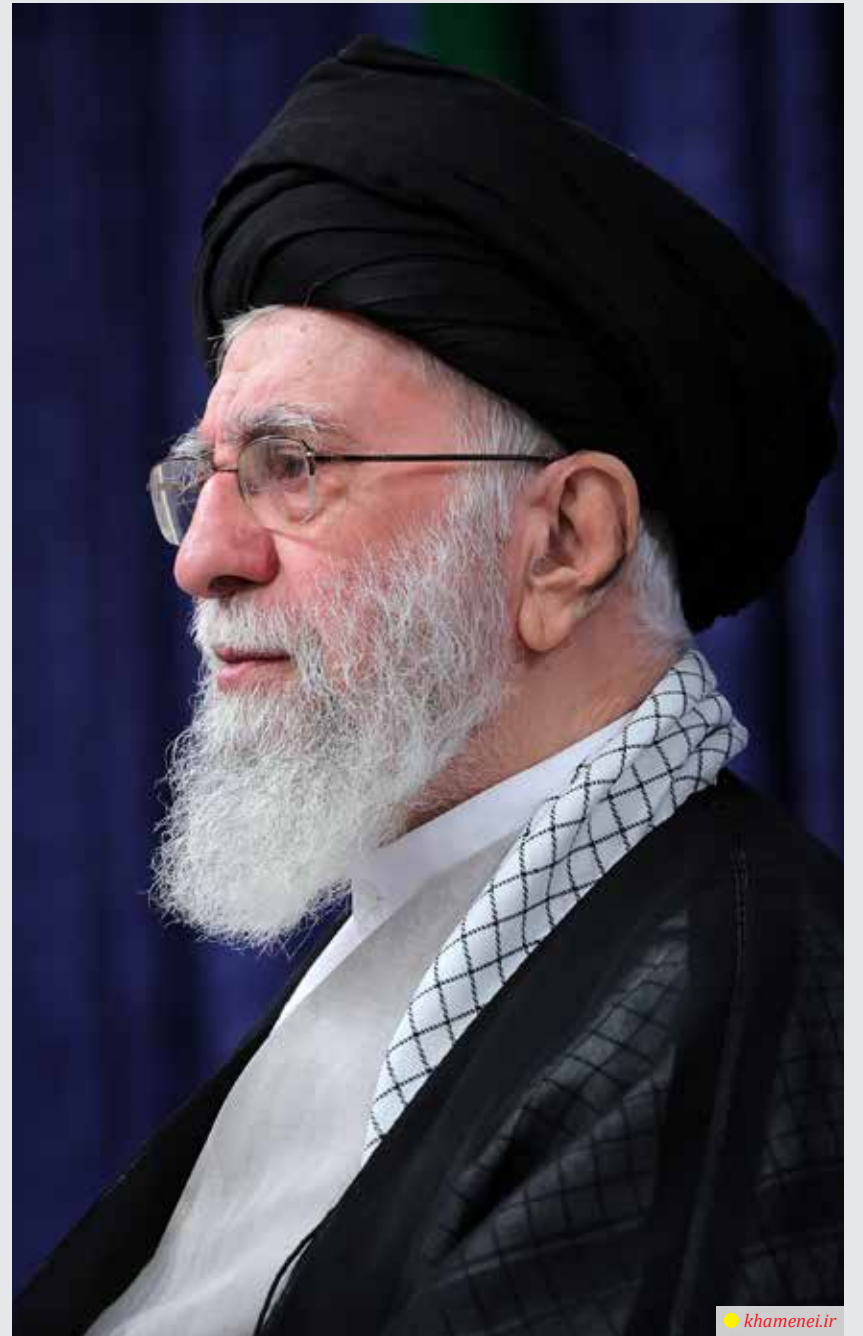
Iran successfully launches communications satellite into space

Indigenous Nahid-2 set to remain in orbit for 5 years



A Soyuz-2.1b rocket booster with a Fregat upper stage, carrying two Ionosfera-M satellites and 18 payloads, including Iran's Nahid-2 telecommunications satellite, blasts off from its launchpad at the Vostochny Cosmodrome in the far-eastern Amur region, Russia July 25, 2025.

● REUTERS



● khamenei.ir

Talks with E3 may halt referral of Iran's nuclear case to UNSC

By Hassan Hanizadeh
International affairs analyst

OPINION

Amid heightened regional tensions and a dual-track foreign policy agenda that Iran must pursue both regionally and globally, two key aspects warrant attention. One lies in the military domain, where the finger must remain on the trigger, with constant vigilance against potential threats. Israeli activity has notably intensified in recent weeks following its defeat in the 12-day imposed war against Iran in June. The regime may now be looking to reduce vulnerabilities in its air defense batteries and could potentially engage in new military provocations. As such, the Iranian Armed Forces must remain on high

alert and avoid being swayed by diplomatic narratives or ongoing talks with foreign counterparts. On the diplomatic front, channels of negotiation remain open. On Friday, a round of talks was held in Istanbul between Iran and the three European powers known as the E3—namely the UK, France, and Germany. These talks could lead to a delay in the referral of Iran's nuclear file to the United Nations Security Council—or prevent it altogether. They also hold the potential to yield a mutually acceptable outcome. However, speculation suggests that the European Union continues to follow Washington's lead and appears intent on imposing certain conditions on Iran.

Page 8 >

Aref urges int'l community to press Israel for immediate end to Gaza genocide



Hidaya, a 31-year-old Palestinian mother, carries her 18-month-old sick son Mohammed al-Mutawaq, who is also displaying signs of malnutrition, inside their tent at the Al-Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City, on July 24, 2025.

● AFP

Enemies 'beat dead horse' Israeli aggression failed to achieve objectives: *Leader*

Political Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Friday that Israel's aggression against Iran on June 13 amounted to "beating a dead horse" and ultimately "failed to achieve its goals", 42 days after the conflict that took the lives of as many as 1,100 Iranians, including several senior generals and scientists. In a statement released to commemorate the martyrs of the 12-day imposed war, Ayatollah Khamenei described the loss of top military brass as "a heavy blow" but said the "resilience and stability" of Iran's military had ensured that the assault did not "eliminate opportunities or disrupt their momentum." "This blow was delivered by the malicious and criminal Zionist regime, the wicked and spiteful enemy of the Iranian nation... but the lunatic and

short-sighted enemy did not achieve its goal," he said. The Leader praised what he called the "miraculous endurance of the Iranian people," saying it was manifested "in their unity, spiritual strength and firm determination to stand together." Ayatollah Khamenei urged all Iranians to maintain "national unity," calling it "a duty for each and every one of us." He also instructed military commanders to prioritize "continually equipping the country with the tools needed to safeguard national security and independence." The Israeli war, backed by US military support, was met with Iran's devastating response, with the Armed Forces launching barrages of ballistic missiles and drones toward occupied territories that inflicted major damage to the regime's military, espionage and energy infrastructure.

Iran, E3 agree to continue nuclear talks to resolve disputes: *Deputy FM*

IAEA chief says Iran ready to restart technical conversations

International Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said on Friday Tehran and the European powers agreed to continue consultations on Iran's nuclear program during "frank and detailed" nuclear talks in Istanbul.

In a post on X, Gharibabadi said he criticized the European stance on Israel's 12-day aggression against Iran last month and discussed the so-called snapback mechanism to reimpose international sanctions against Iran during talks with officials from Germany, France and Britain.

"It was agreed that consultations on this matter will continue," he added.

The three European countries known as E3, in recent weeks have threatened to trigger the UN "snapback" mechanism if no deal is reached between Iran and the United States.

Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi, said during the negotiations, "Iran clearly expressed its views and opposition" to the European troika's possible move to reinstate UN sanctions against the country.

Takht-Ravanchi added that the Iranian

negotiating team also reaffirmed the country's right to uranium enrichment, as stipulated under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, insisting that such enrichment "must continue inside Iran."

He also noted that negotiators urged that all "cruel sanctions" must be lifted "as soon as possible."

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 last month, triggering the 12-day conflict.

During Iran-US talks, Washington insisted on zero uranium enrichment under any deal, which has been strongly rejected by Tehran.

Iran-IAEA technical talks

Gharibabadi also said on Tuesday that Iran has agreed to host a technical delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the coming weeks in a gesture of goodwill, following a period of heightened tensions after the US-Israeli acts of aggression.

The IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said on Friday that Iran has indicated that it will be ready to restart technical-level discus-

sions the UN agency.

Iran suspended its cooperation with the IAEA after its latest report on Iran was used as a pretext by the Israeli regime to launch strikes on Iran.

On Thursday, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated Iran's unwavering stance on uranium enrichment.

"The world must know that we will continue to steadfastly defend the rights of the Iranian people in peaceful nuclear energy, particularly enrichment," Araghchi said.

He added that following the recent US-Israeli aggression, in which nearly 1,100 Iranians including military commanders, scientists and civilians were killed, it is essential for international parties to understand Iran's firm position.

"Our enrichment will continue; we will not relinquish this right," he affirmed.

Snapback mechanism

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.



A European delegation leaves the Iranian Consulate following nuclear talks, in Istanbul, Turkey, on July 25, 2025. ● YASIN AKGUL/AFP

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.

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.

Aref urges int'l community to press Israel for immediate halt to Gaza genocide

Over 120 Palestinians, including 83 children, starve to death



A displaced Palestinian girl reacts as she receives lentil soup at a food distribution point in Gaza City in the northern Gaza Strip on July 25, 2025. ● OMAR AL-QATTAA/AFP

International Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Thursday that the "blatant genocide" taking place in the Gaza Strip must be immediately stopped through "binding and practical" measures by the international community.

"The death of innocent people from hunger, due to the Zionist regime's obstruction of food delivery to the oppressed people of Gaza, has been met with the disgraceful silence of international bodies claiming to advocate human rights," he said in a post on X.

Aref underlined that the "perpetrators of this crime against humanity" must be held accountable.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in a phone conversation with his Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on Friday emphasized the necessity of utilizing all available means to "break the siege of Gaza, deliver essential supplies to its people, and put an end to the genocide in

occupied Palestine."

The Iranian foreign minister also condemned a recent motion passed in the Israeli parliament that seeks to annex the West Bank and Jordan Valley, describing it as yet another sign of the occupying regime's expansionist nature.

"This action, coinciding with the genocide in Gaza and the ongoing grave violations of human rights in the West Bank, lays bare the sinister intentions of the Zionists to pursue the complete annihilation of Palestine as a land, nation, and independent identity."

Humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate under the Israeli blockade.

Gaza's Health Ministry says at least 122 Palestinians, including 83 children, have starved to death in the territory since Israel launched its war on Gaza in October 2023. Most of the deaths have been in recent weeks.

Tons of food, clean water, medical supplies and other items sit untouched just outside Gaza as humanitarian organizations are

blocked from accessing or delivering them by Israel.

Israel, which controls all supplies, food, medicine and fuel entering Gaza, has imposed a punishing blockade for months.

In recent weeks, more than 1,000 desperate people have been killed trying to reach food, mostly in mass shootings by Israeli soldiers posted near aid distribution centers, according to the United Nations.

Gaza will run out of the specialized therapeutic food needed to save the lives of severely malnourished children by mid-August, UNICEF and humanitarian agencies said.

Doctors Without Borders, a global medical charity also known by its French acronym MSF, said on Friday that a quarter of all young children and pregnant or breast-feeding women screened at its clinics in Gaza last week were malnourished. It blames Israel's "policy of starvation."

The Gaza Strip is currently experiencing one of the worst humanitarian crises in its history. Since October 7, 2023, Israel has waged a devastating war on the enclave, and since March 2, has completely sealed off all crossings, blocking the entry of food, medical supplies, and humanitarian aid.

The closure has caused acute malnutrition, especially among children and the sick. Famine conditions have been reported in multiple areas, with aid organizations warning that time is running out to prevent mass deaths from starvation.

Iran successfully launches communications satellite into space

Indigenous Nahid-2 set to remain in orbit for 5 years

National Desk

Iran's domestically-built Nahid-2 satellite was successfully launched into space on Friday aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket.

The Nahid-2 communications satellite was launched from Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome using a Soyuz rocket.

The Iranian Space Agency (ISA) announced that it has received the first telemetry data from the satellite.

The data confirms that the satellite is intact and functioning properly, the agency said.

Weighing 110 kilograms, the satellite was designed and manufactured by Iranian engineers.

Commissioned by ISA and developed in collaboration with the Iranian Space Research Center, the launch was part of a broader multi-satellite mission that included Russia's Ionosfera-M3 and M4 satellites, along with 18 others from various countries.

One notable feature of the launch was the presence of the Iranian Space Agency's emblem on the Soyuz launch vehicle—signaling Iran's official participation in a major international space mission.



The Iranian Nahid-2 communications satellite is launched from Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome using a Soyuz rocket on July 25, 2025. ● RUSSIAN SPACE AGENCY ROSCOSMOS

The Soyuz rocket has previously carried several Iranian satellites into space, including Khayyam, Pars-1, and Hodhod.

Nahid-2 is designed to remain in orbit for five years, with Hassan Salarieh, the head of the ISA, saying on Friday that Nahid-3 is currently under construction.

In December, Iran announced it had put its heaviest payload to date into space, using a domestically manufactured satellite carrier.

In September, Iran said it had put the Chamran-1 research satellite into orbit using the Ghaem-100 carrier.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Pezeshkian: Unprecedented efforts underway to end Tehran water crisis

300 mcm of water to be transferred annually to Alborz, Tehran via Taleqan Dam

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian stressed on Thursday that unprecedented efforts are underway to address Tehran's water crisis via water transfer from the Taleqan Dam.

Visiting the Taleqan Dam — 135 kilometers northwest of Tehran — and noting the reduction in its water level causing supply issues, Pezeshkian said, "Unprecedented efforts are underway to resolve the water crisis in Tehran and the region through the transfer of water from the Taleqan Dam. With the efforts made, it is possible to stabilize the current situation."

The president asked the public to conserve water until the completion of the project.

He made an unannounced trip to Alborz Province to inspect two water supply projects — the Ziyaran to Bilaqan water conveyance line project and the Mahestan City water treatment plant project in Savojbolagh County, along with several other important provincial projects.

He also reviewed the latest water storage status of the Karaj Dam and, in a meeting with relevant provincial officials, discussed ways to accelerate the implementation of the visited projects.

Pezeshkian first inspected the progress of the new Ziyaran to Bilaqan water conveyance line project. The core concept of the project, launched in January, 2023, is to increase the water intake capacity from the Taleqan Dam and transfer it to Tehran via the existing route (Ziyaran to Bilaqan).

According to the project managers, the project has achieved 5% progress and has the capacity to transfer 6.5 cubic meters of water per second. Combined

with the 5 cubic meter capacity of the old water conveyance line, it will enable the annual transfer of 300 million cubic meters (mcm) of water to Alborz and Tehran provinces.

The sustainable water conveyance line from Ziyaran to Bilaqan had achieved 27% progress during the previous three-year administration. With the attention and support of the current administration, its progress reached 70% within eight months.

The project is a strategic initiative for the future and one of the key projects in supplying drinking water to the metropolises of Tehran and Karaj.

The president also visited the Mahrestan City water treatment plant project in Savojbolagh County. The project, with 100% progress, is ready for operation. It has a treatment capacity of 105 liters per second and 90,000 liters per day to supply drinking water to Savojbolagh, Nazarabad, and Eshtehard counties in western Alborz Province.

In the current water year, the dams supplying drinking water to Tehran and Alborz provinces have faced a significant reduction in reserves. The Karaj Dam, with a decline of over 60%, and the Taleqan Dam, with a 33% reduction compared to last year, are currently in a fragile state.

During his trip, in a meeting with Alborz Province managers, Pezeshkian warned about the water resource situation in Tehran and Alborz provinces, pointing to the significant decrease in rainfall compared to the country's long-term average.

"This year's rainfall trend has been about 40 to 44 percent less than the country's 80-year long-term average. This has directly impacted the volume of dam reserves; for instance, the wa-



President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) inspects a water supply project in the northern Alborz Province on July 24, 2025.
● president.ir

ter level behind the Taleqan Dam has drastically decreased, which is a serious warning bell for supplying drinking water to the capital and surrounding cities," Pezeshkian said.

"Round-the-clock efforts are underway by the governor-general of Alborz, relevant ministries, municipalities, and with public participation to prevent more severe crises through the emergency transfer of water from the Taleqan Dam."

Corrective measures

"The administration decided to remove lawns requiring daily irrigation, and discussions with municipalities have

emphasized using drought-resistant plant species to preserve urban beauty while reducing water consumption," he added.

Emphasizing the necessity of the present generation's responsibility towards the future, he stressed, "Changing consumption patterns and utilizing smart and sustainable agriculture is an unavoidable necessity for preserving the country's water resources and ensuring life for future generations."

Caution over environmental consequences

Pezeshkian also, referring to the water crisis and the consequences of land

subsidence, said, "We are consuming resources that have no substitute; we are extracting groundwater hundreds of millions of years old, and the land is subsidizing. Development disproportionate to natural resources will be disastrous. Therefore, we must seek help from elites, professors, experts, and the public to protect the environment."

The president, noting inter-sectoral and public cooperation, identified widespread water conservation as the most important solution to overcome the critical situation. He said, "If the current resources are depleted and groundwater is not managed, we will face a major crisis in the region."

Minister: 10,000 MW of industrial electricity entering national grid

Smartization as silver bullet to efficiency enhancement

Economy Desk

Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Mohammad Atabak stated that, "10,000 megawatts of electricity generated by the country's industries is being fed into the national distribution grid."

Atabak added that factories in the industrial sector are active and not only generate their own required electricity but also inject surplus power into the national grid for urban consumption, IRNA reported.

The minister emphasized supporting industries as an essential step "to sustain production" under current conditions.

The country has struggled with a persistent energy crisis in recent years. Since early May, power blackouts returned across the country after a brief respite following winter shortages.

President Masoud Pezeshkian in May granted all administrative departments a deadline - effective June 21 - to supply part of their required electricity from solar energy.

Modern tech key to power sector survival

Meanwhile, a senior official from the Iran Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (Tavanir) has highlighted weak energy productivity, infrastructure challenges, and the necessity of focusing on new technologies as primary solutions to overcome the country's energy supply-demand imbalance.

Speaking to IRNA about technological initiatives in the power industry, Abdolamir Yaqouti, director-general of energy and customer affairs at Tavanir cited grid smartization as the main path to enhancing efficiency, "Over 5.6 million smart meters have been installed, enabling pre-



cise consumption monitoring and control."

He further noted that renewable energy development — particularly solar — is targeted to reach 10,000 megawatts by year-end.

Regarding power plant efficiency programs, Yaqouti added, "Increasing power plant efficiency and reforming production structures are crucial pillars for resolving the national energy imbalance."

He emphasized that Iran's energy productivity remains significantly below global standards, "The country's energy intensity index is 2.5 to 3 times higher than the global average. This means we consume triple the energy to produce one unit of output, rendering macro-level planning inefficient."

Addressing the importance of optimized building architecture and energy standards, Yaqouti concluded, "A significant portion of summer electricity and winter gas consumption stems from inadequate insulation and non-standard designs. Traditional architecture models have demonstrated that consumption optimization is achievable even without advanced equipment."

Iran ranks among top five in global heavy livestock

Economy Desk

Iranian Minister of Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah said that the country has become one of the world's top five countries in heavy livestock breeding.

"Iran has become one of the world's top five countries in heavy livestock breeding, and its produced milk is utilized by reputable international companies," IRNA quoted as Nouri Qezeljah saying at a meeting with agricultural stakeholders in Isfahan's Science and Research Town on Thursday.

Nouri emphasized that planning is underway to enhance light livestock quality, aiming to reduce dependence on meat imports.

The minister did not elaborate on the details or criteria of the ranking, nor did he specify which five countries are included. But the top five countries in heavy livestock (primarily cattle and buffalo) were India, Brazil, China, United States, and Ethiopia. These countries led in terms of overall livestock population and/or beef and buffalo meat production.

"Currently, about 20% of the country's required meat is imported, but these imports have created numerous difficulties for domestic producers, administrative personnel,



and national resources," Nouri said.

Regarding drought's impact on wheat supply, he stated, "This year's drought has increased the need for wheat imports by 1 to 2 million tons, presenting unique challenges in import logistics."

Emphasis on knowledge-based agriculture

Addressing water crises and soil resource shortages in Isfahan, the agriculture minister asserted, "The solution lies in knowledge-based agriculture. High-tech greenhouses exemplify this sector's successes, recouping investments in under three years."

He urged investors to trust

agriculture — particularly technology-driven initiatives — adding, "Knowledge-based agriculture is profitable today. We expect researchers, scholars, and progressive farmers in Isfahan to propose innovative solutions for optimal water consumption."

Nouri dismissed rumors about cost-effective imports, stating, "The world faces food shortages. The Ukraine war proved global markets cannot be relied upon. We must defend domestic production by increasing productivity and reducing water consumption."

He concluded by expressing hope that comprehensive cooperation would "achieve sustainable self-sufficiency in Iran's food security."

Variables at play in normalizing Syria-Israel relations



By Alireza Majidi
West Asia affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Before the recent crisis in Sweida, Ahmed al-Sharaa had already put forward his readiness to strike a deal on normalizing relations with the Israeli regime. In this regard, two schools of thought had already come up against each other in the United States regarding how to deal with him: One camp is pessimistic of Sharaa but at the same time believes it is necessary to come to terms with him as a current reality in Syria and to tap into his capacities to a certain extent. Brett McGurk, former US special presidential envoy for Syria under the

Obama, Biden administrations, and early Trump presidency, backs this approach.

On the other side, President Trump currently supports a contrasting view, which is also endorsed by Tom Barrack, the present US special envoy for Syria. Barrack claims that Sharaa holds unique capacities in Syria and has pulled off actions that no one else could have. According to Barrack, Sharaa's most significant achievement was that he managed to pave the way for the withdrawal of Iranian forces from Syria.

Barrack also credits Sharaa with finishing the terrorist group Hurras al-Din, an Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. He attributes to Sharaa the elimination of the radical Salafi movement and the holding

in check of the moderate Jihadi movement in the country. The key distinction between these two groups is that the radical Jihadis do not recognize borders and emphasize global citizenship and "armed uprising" to enforce Sharia across nations, while moderate Jihadis acknowledge borders and support contextual interpretations of Sharia according to time and place.

Furthermore, Barrack states that since 2017, Sharaa had attempted to make contact with the US-led international coalition battling terrorism by feeding intel on dangerous wanted terrorists, enabling their targeted air strikes — an approach repeatedly carried out in Idlib. Given these facts, Barrack believes the US should team up with Sharaa

in Syria. In return, Americans expect Sharaa to have Syria join the Abraham Accords and simultaneously utilize Syria's resources for US objectives in Lebanon and to even exert influence over Iraq. Meanwhile, the prevailing Israeli stance towards Sharaa is somewhat negative. Following talks between Syria and Israel, obstacles surfaced due to disagreements and held up further negotiations. However, these differences don't mean that a deal is out of the question. The disagreements revolve around Sharaa's willingness to officially hand over the Golan Heights to Israel in exchange for Israel withdrawing from areas it seized after Bashar al-Assad's fall and returning to its 1974 agreed borders.

Disputes also flared up over



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L), Syria's self-proclaimed President Ahmad al-Sharaa (2nd-L), and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

● THE CRADLE



Another major sticking point for Sharaa, even more important than handing over the Golan Heights, is that after normalization, Israel should likewise stay out of Syria's internal affairs, just like how it was stipulated in the 1974 disengagement agreement struck under Hafez al-Assad. Conversely, Israel reserves the right to conduct preemptive operations where it feels a threat may emanate from Syria, insisting any agreement will not clip its wings in this regard.



Syria's self-proclaimed President Ahmad al-Sharaa (L) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

● AL MAYADEEN ENGLISH

how the Syria-Israel agreements should be announced: Israel demands Syria plainly declare it no longer claims the Golan Heights and recognizes these lands as Israeli, while Sharaa insists if such a deal happens, it must remain confidential and publicly, he would describe part of the Golan as being turned into a "garden of peace".

Another major sticking point for Sharaa, even more important than handing over the Golan Heights, is that after normalization, Israel should likewise stay out of Syria's internal affairs, just like how it was stipulated in the 1974 disengagement agreement struck under Hafez al-Assad. Conversely, Israel reserves the right to conduct preemptive operations where it feels a threat may emanate from Syria, insisting any agreement will not clip its wings in this regard.

On another front, Turkey, which has been influential in Syrian affairs since Sharaa came to power, opposes the plan to normalize ties with Israel. Previously, Turkey had also vetoed agreements between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). However, in the current circumstances, Turkey lacks the power to put the brakes on this deal. Although Sharaa maintains good relations with Turkey, he has occasionally acted beyond Turkish influence, with normalization being a prime example.

While Turkey and Qatar oppose normalization between Syria and Israel, the UAE and Saudi Arabia are lining up behind Sharaa, encouraging him to accept the plan. In my view, despite all these hurdles, Syria will ultimately come around to normalizing relations with Israel. However, reaching a deal might drag on a bit longer, and Israel may need to bend over backwards in some cases. Accepting normalization and Syria's involvement in Lebanese matters could set the stage for further transformations down the road.



Israel blindsides Trump in self-serving effort to break up Syria


By Elfadil Ibrahim
Columnist
O P I N I O N

Just days before Israeli F-35s screamed over Damascus, the improbable seemed within reach. US Special Envoy Tom Barrack, leveraging his dual role as Ambassador to Turkey and point man on Syria, was brokering painstaking back-channel talks between two historic enemies. The Syrian government, led by interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, the former Islamist militant turned statesman, signaled openness to a non-aggression pact with Israel. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar publicly welcomed Syria into "the peace and normalization circle in the Middle East".

By July 12, leaks suggested a deal was drawing closer: Al-Sharaa and Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani, forced to move quickly in exchange for much-needed security guarantees, reconstruction aid, and investment, had reportedly met directly with Israeli officials in Azerbaijan. In his ongoing quest for a Nobel Peace Prize, US President Donald Trump had personally met al-Sharaa in Riyadh and thereafter started dismantling decades of sanctions, betting big on Syria's rehabilitation and regional integration.

Central to this US vision was the consolidation of a stable, unitary Syrian state. Barrack is spearheading this arduous task, working to dismantle potential sources of fragmentation. Currently, his most critical, and contentious mission is the merger of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) — America's ground allies against ISIS — into the nascent Syrian national army. Barrack's message to SDF commander Mazloum Abdi during tense Damascus meetings earlier this month was uncompromising: "One country, one army, one people."

Barrack bluntly dismissed Kurdish demands for federalism or autonomous military structures as unworkable and destabilizing, arguing, "In all of these countries, what we learned is federalism doesn't work."

This drive for a unified military command is the bedrock of US strategy to prevent Syria's balkanization and create a viable partner for regional peace, including normalization with Israel.



The eruption of violence in Syria's Druze heartland of Sweida on July 11 provided Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the perfect catalyst to derail this fragile progress. When clashes broke out between Druze militias and Bedouin tribes, Syria's government intervened to restore order — reportedly notifying Israel in advance about troop movements, clarifying that the move was not intended as a threat to its southern neighbor. According to reports, Syria's government misread the situation, believing it had a green light from both the US and Israel to deploy troops, encouraged by US messaging that Syria should be governed as a centralized state, and influenced by nascent security talks with Israel. Israel, however, viewed the situation as an invitation for escalation. War Minister Israel Katz framed devastating air strikes on Syrian tanks and later in Damascus itself as a moral imperative: protecting a persecuted Druze minority, a group with a substantial and visible presence in Israel, including in the Israeli military. "The regime [Syrian cabinet] sent troops south of Damascus...and began slaughtering the Druze," Netanyahu declared a day after Israeli bombs tore into the General Command Headquarters of


the Syrian Army. Israel's actions — encroaching into Syrian territory and conducting hundreds of air strikes since the fall of Assad and now bombing Damascus during sensitive negotiations — directly undermine US policy by preventing the consolidation of a sovereign and unified Syria capable of reclaiming its south and becoming a viable partner for the US vision. Crucially, the very Druze community Netanyahu claims to protect largely rejects this imposed patronage. Two out of the three spiritual leaders of the Druze community in Syria — Sheikhs Hamoud al-Hanawi and Youssef Jarboun — emphasize their Syrian identity and demand protection from the Syrian state, not external powers. Sheikh Jarboun, on the back of recent events in Sweida, insisted solutions must come from within Syria, also sending a message to Israel that "any attack on the Syrian state is an attack on us...We are part of Syria."

Among Syria's Druze leadership, only Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri champions Israel's intervention, labeling the cabinet "terrorist criminal gangs" — a view rejected by many within his community. This isolation was articulated by Laith al-Balous, leader of the influential "Rijal al Karama" (Men

of Dignity) militia. Formed years earlier to defend the Druze against both the deposed Assad regime and extremists, al-Balous forcefully countered al-Hijri on Al Jazeera: "There is one of the leaders who took the sect to another direction. We, as the people of the Sweida Governorate, reject it and do not accept it," adding that we must "stand with our Syrian people".

Israel's inability to act as sole guarantor of the Druze community's security in Syria was laid bare that Friday when — just days after bombing Syria's Defense Ministry and presidential palace — an Israeli official tacitly admitted Damascus alone could stabilize the crisis. "In light of ongoing instability," the unnamed official told Reuters, Israel would now "allow limited entry of Syrian internal security forces into Sweida district for the next 48 hours".

This reversal implicitly acknowledged that the Syrian government — whose troops and command structure Israel had targeted — remain the indispensable actor needed to restore order and act as a buffer between the warring Bedouin tribes and Druze militias. Indeed, these localized clashes were the underlying trigger that drew in Syrian government forces, whose


Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) stands with US President Donald Trump after signing the Abraham Accords in Washington on September 15, 2020.
● TOM BRENNER/REUTERS


Israel's actions — encroaching into Syrian territory and conducting hundreds of air strikes since the fall of Assad and now bombing Damascus during sensitive negotiations — directly undermine US policy by preventing the consolidation of a sovereign and unified Syria capable of reclaiming its south and becoming a viable partner for the US vision.


Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shibani (2nd-L) stands next to US envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack as he raises the American flag at the US ambassador's residency in Damascus, Syria, on May 29, 2025.
● FIRAS MAKDESI/REUTERS

intervention then became Israel's pretext for bombing. The US administration, blindsided by Israel's bombings, scrambled to contain the fallout. Officials revealed they explicitly "told the Israelis to stand down and take a breath," urging direct talks with Damascus instead of bombs. Secretary of State Marco Rubio publicly framed the strikes as a dangerous impediment to building a "peaceful and stable Syria," undermining months of US political capital invested in al-Sharaa's government. State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce pointedly clarified that "the United States did not support recent Israeli strikes."

Most recently, Special Envoy Barrack went a step further, siding explicitly with Syria and noting that the government "has conducted themselves as best they can...to bring a diverse society together," adding that Israel's air assault "came at a very bad time". Israel's strikes expose a cynical pattern that echoes its sabotage of nuclear talks between the US and Iran. Just as Netanyahu lobbied relentlessly against US-Iran diplomacy — creating conditions for Israel's unilateral strikes that later succeeded in luring Washington into conflict — he now undermines US-Syrian rapprochement. The contradiction here is particularly glaring: Israel has spent the last few weeks publicly urging Syria to join the Abraham Accords; Yet, it also actively attacks the very government forces it claims to want as partners.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar — who previously dismissed al-Sharaa's government as a "bunch of jihadists" — openly championed Syria's federalization in February 2025, insisting on dividing the country along sectarian lines to ensure respect for "different ways of life". This vision, which included lobbying Washington to allow Russia to retain its bases on Syria's Mediterranean coast to counter Turkey's influence and keep Syria decentralized, stands in direct opposition to the unified, stable state that the Syrians, neighboring states, and the Trump administration are working to build.

Israel's escalation in Syria, which awkwardly coincides with US efforts to lift sanctions and establish unified military control over Syrian territory, places the Trump administration in a tight corner. Through its recent maneuvers, Israel has signaled its intent to control Syria's destiny, regardless of the damage to US strategy.

With each bomb dropped on Damascus, Israel isn't just attacking Syrian infrastructure. It is dismantling the very pillars of a potential regional order of sovereign states based on stability and integration, revealing a fundamental divergence that is becoming increasingly costly for Washington, and for the wider region.

The ultimate test for the Trump administration is whether it can restrain Israel's aggressive approach and allow its own vision for a unified, stable Syria to take root.

The article first appeared on Responsible Statecraft.



FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship: Iran edges Poland in five-set thriller

Sports Desk

Iranian boys held out a fight-back by Poland to beat the European opponent 3-2 (25-22, 25-14, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13) in Pool C of the FIVB U19 World Championship in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on Friday. This was a first victory for Iran – runner-up to France in the previous edition in 2023 – at this year's event following a shock five-set setback against Spain on the preceding day in the Uzbek capital. Opposite-spiker Amir Naderi chipped in a game-high 23 points for Iran, which was playing without Mahan Barzkar after the prolific outside-hitter suffered an injury in the fifth set against Spain to miss the rest of the tournament. Four other Iranians also finished in double figures on Friday, as Mohammad-Amin Rahimi contributed 14 points, with Nima Bateni, Seyyed Hossein Zamani, and Armin Asiaei scoring 10 apiece. Opposite Maksymilian Łyson

and outside-hitter Oskar Trawka were the joint-top scorers for Poland, which had edged out Italy in five sets in their opening game, with 16 points while Jakub Szczurowski finished on 10. Chasing a third world under-19 title, and first since 2017, Iran will take on Tunisia today, before squaring off against Egypt (Monday) and Italy (Tuesday) in the pool phase. The top four in each of the three six-team groups will progress to the round of 16. Elsewhere on Friday, defending champion France celebrated a second win in Pool B by easing past Algeria in straight sets (25-16, 25-14, 25-14), while Belgium recovered from a first-day setback against Pakistan to defeat Puerto Rico 3-0 (25-21, 25-21, 25-16) in Pool A.

Iranian middle-blocker Armin Asiaei (19) celebrates a point with teammates during a 3-2 victory over Poland at the FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on July 25, 2025. ● FIVB



● asianhandball.org

Asian Roller Skating Championships: Iran beats China in women's inline hockey event

Sports Desk

Iranian women's inline hockey team defeated China 2-1 in its second outing at the Asian Roller Skating Championships in Jecheon, South Korea, on Friday. Hadiseh Pourhashemi scored twice as Iranian girls celebrated a second

win in a row at the multi-sport event, having beaten India 6-1 in their opener. Next for Iran at the inline hockey contests is a game against the host today. Iran has already bagged two medals through Taraneh Ahmadi and Reza Lesani in the 20th edition of the competition.

A silver winner at the Asian Games in 2023, Ahmadi settled for a runner-up finish in the women's inline freestyle speed slalom event, while Lesani – a gold medalist at the Hero Battle Cup in Milan earlier in the month – took the bronze in the men's contests.



● iranskating.ir

Asian Women's Youth Handball Championship: Iran pips Chinese Taipei to consolation fifth place

Sports Desk

There was a bit of consolation for Iranian girls at the end of a tough Asian Youth Handball Championship campaign in Jinggangshan, China, courtesy of a 34-33 victory over the Chinese Taipei in the fifth-place playoff. Parisan Khosravi delivered a player-of-the-match performance with

11 goals, as the game finished 30-30 at the end of normal time before Iran came out victorious in the shootout. Diana Rezaei, meanwhile, contributed six goals before being forced out injured in the early stages of the second period, with Sana Foly-chipping in eight. Iranian girls were unlucky to be drawn in the same group as Japan and South

Korea – top two in the previous edition – suffering back-to-back 40-27 defeats against the two Asian powerhouses, but they managed to beat India 42-30 to stand third in the Group B table. Iran then overcame Hong Kong 32-15, thanks to a prolific performance by Rezaei, before pulling off a win against the Chinese Taipei on Thursday.

Japan will be looking to defend its crown when taking on China in today's final showpiece at the Gymnasium of Jiangxi University of Software Professional Technology, with South Korea and Kazakhstan fighting for the third place. The four semifinalists have already booked a spot at the 2026 IHF Youth World Championship.

FIBA U16 Asia Cup WABA qualifiers: Iran suffers final defeat against Lebanon

Sports Desk

Iran settled for a runner-up finish at the FIBA U16 Asia Cup West Asian qualifiers after an 88-80 against Lebanon in Thursday's final in Amman, Jordan. Johnny Sawma chipped in a game-high 33 points, as Lebanon celebrated a second win against Iran in the Jordanian capital, having come out victorious by an 84-70 scoreline when the two teams met in their opening game in Group A of the qualifiers. Mauricio Abboud contributed a double-double for Lebanon with 20 points and 15 rebounds, while Charbel El Herera (18 points) and Amin Nahle (12) also finished in double figures. Alireza Rashidi was the Iranian top scorer on Thursday with 30 points, followed by Mohammad-Safa Behnia (15), Mohammad-Saleh Pakgozar

(14), with Amirreza Azari registering a double-double with 13 points and 14 rebounds. A place in the final showpiece had already booked a spot for the two sides at

the 2025 FIBA U16 Asia Cup in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Iran bounced back from the first-day loss to Lebanon to beat Syria 86-81, before Bardia Khosravi

delivered an MVP performance with 19 points and 11 rebounds to help Iran come out victorious (96-88) against Jordan on Tuesday and advance to the final.



● DANIAL AHMADI/IRIBF

Relish adventure, fun at Luna Park of Shiraz

Iranica Desk

Shiraz is considered one of the most beautiful cities in Iran, home to a wealth of attractions. While the city is best known for its historical sites, Shiraz also offers numerous exciting recreational spots, one of which is Luna Park. This beautiful park is perfect for those who enjoy thrilling activities. Luna Park is one of the oldest amusement parks in the city. It features a wide range of fun and thrilling rides for all ages. Its large Ferris wheel, considered the park's symbol, is especially popular. Beyond the amusements, the park boasts expansive green spaces and suitable amenities, making it an ideal spot for night outings in Shiraz. The sound of laughter and the lively atmosphere highlight its constant appeal for locals and tourists alike. Luna Park operates every day of the week, and everyone is welcome to enjoy its exciting rides during opening hours, [kojaro.com](#) wrote.

After enjoying the games and attractions, visitors can relax at the park's restaurant and café. The food stalls also have their own fans.

Recreational facilities

Luna Park of Shiraz goes beyond just thrilling rides, offering diverse recreational facilities for visitors of all ages. For those seeking even greater excitement, there are numerous rides such as the sledge ride with sharp twists and turns, Frisbee, roller coaster simulator, flying chair, swinging pendulum, Ranger, and other fast-paced attractions that raise your adrenaline. Children also have their own colorful, safe play areas where they can play and burn off energy without worry. Other sections of Luna Park include an aquarium and reptile exhibition, air hockey, mobile



wikipedia.org



parsine.com



pinorest.com



see-theme.com

telescope, shock room, virtual reality experiences, 4D cinema, bumper cars, space spinner, and more. Alongside all these, the park features vast green spaces and amenities like a café and buffet, creating a pleasant environment for relaxation and recharging after fun and games.

Ferris wheel

One of the main attractions of

Luna Park is its tall and popular Ferris wheel. Due to its impressive height, it provides panoramic and breathtaking views of Shiraz and a relaxing experience for the whole family. It is a favorite for all visitors looking for excitement.

Waterfall slide

The tall and long waterfall slide offers a different experience from regular slides. You glide along a twisting, curving path

and eventually descend at high speed. The feeling of sliding from a great height combined with the thrill of speed makes this one of the most exciting parts of Luna Park.

Ranger

For those seeking real excitement, the Ranger ride is an excellent choice. Its sudden spins at high elevation give a sensation of weightlessness

and soaring. The intensity and height make it an adrenaline-packed and unforgettable experience for thrill-seekers.

Tunnel of horror

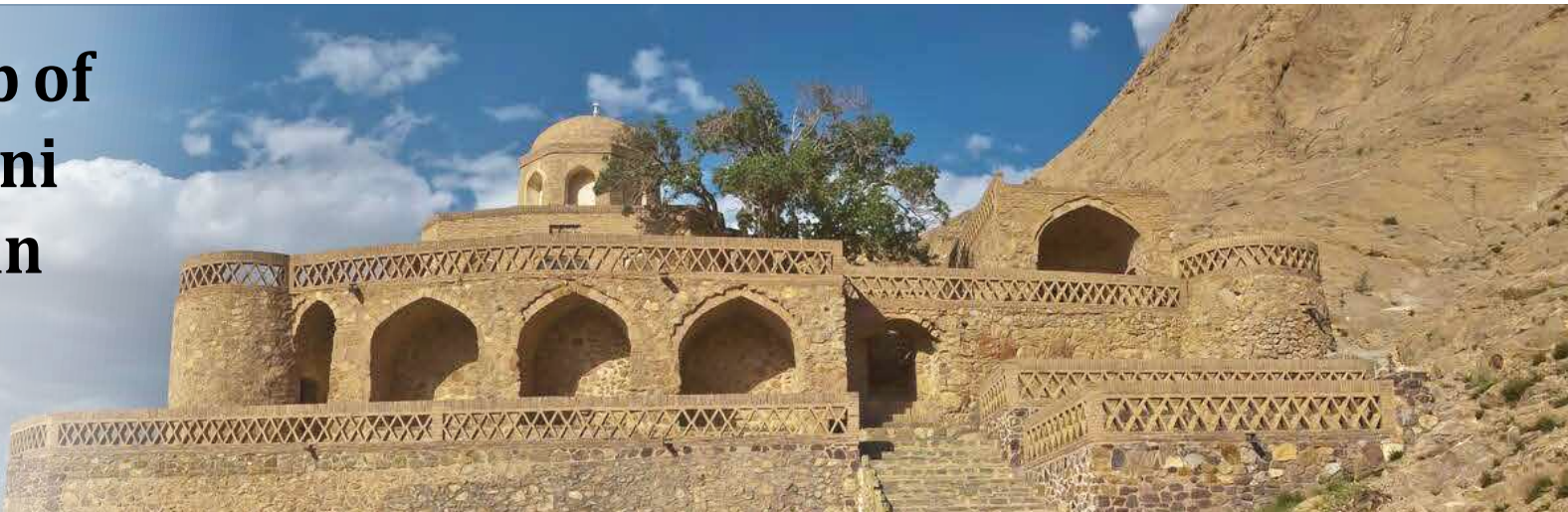
The tunnel of horror at Luna Park is designed for those seeking a spine-chilling and unusual experience. Inside this dark, winding tunnel, you'll encounter special scary effects and strange sounds that create both

fear and excitement. Passing through the tunnel as a group can be both entertaining and a little bit scary.

Roller coaster simulator

Roller coasters are universally loved amusement park rides, and Luna Park features a roller coaster simulator that delivers the rush of ups and downs to visitors in a perfectly safe environment.

Magnificent tomb of Bozorgmehr Qaeni in South Khorasan Province



visitiran.ir

Tomb of Bozorgmehr Qaeni is located in the heights of Ghahestan Mountain, in the city of Qaen, South Khorasan Province. Upon visiting this site, one cannot help but wonder how all the materials were transported to construct the tomb in such a remote location. Although it is not definitively known whether this tomb belongs to the minister of Khosrow I, the Sassanid king, or the minister of the Ghaznavid dynasty, today it stands as a magnificent monument within an area covering more than five hundred hectares at the foothill of Abuzar Mountain, near the Ghahestan National Park. It is believed that the name

Abuzar, was inspired by the first part of the name Buzarjomehr, the Arabic version of Bozorgmehr. Today, his descendants are known in Qaen as Nouri Abuzari. The tomb of Bozorgmehr has been listed as a national heritage site of Iran and is managed by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization of Iran. The tomb's structure was built in the form of a Chalipa, or Persian cross, during the sixth and seventh centuries AH. Its construction utilized materials such as stone, plaster, brick, and Sarooj — a water-resistant mortar. Dating to the middle centuries, the tomb features a large dome, four Ivans, and intricate deco-

rations including Muqarnas, plaster stuccoes, and pointed barrel vaults. The elegant dome is visible from afar, and subsequent restorations have enhanced its beauty further. A mastic tree growing nearby adds to the landscape's charm; it is said to be over seven hundred years old and native to Iran's desert climate and southern ecosystem. Additionally, there is a tablet within the tomb indicating that certain endowments were made, including a qanat that has been endowed to the site. Local residents believe that without such endowments, the tomb may have fallen into ruin and the name of Bozorgmehr forgotten.





Tehran launches second phase of 'In Women's Words' art exhibition

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Art Bureau inaugurated the second phase of the 'In Women's Words' exhibition at Tehran's Iranian Artists Forum on Thursday July 24, showcasing works by female painters, ceramists, illustrators, and pop artists from across the country.

The exhibition expands on a July 23 show at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, where modernist women artists took center stage in the institution's most extensive gender-focused survey to date. In its second installment, 'In Women's Words' spills into the city's gallery circuit, offering a broader snapshot of contemporary female creativity across mediums and styles, IRNA reported.

At Thursday's opening, attended by Deputy Culture Minister Nadereh Rezaei, Iranian Artists Forum CEO Mohammad-Mehdi Asgarpour, and Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art director Reza Dabirinejad, artistic director

Sajjad Baghban-Maher said the decision to extend the exhibition stemmed from the limited scope of the museum's collection.

"The vault could only tell part of the story," he said. "This second part gives space to voices we couldn't include there."

Each of the venue's galleries has taken on a separate curatorial theme. The Momayez and Homa galleries present 'Trans-Pop in Women's Words,' featuring Iranian pop-art-inspired works. The Zemestan gallery, curated by Vard Gallery, highlights 50 hand-printed pieces by 50 women artists under the title 'Printmaking Through Her Eyes'.

In the Paez gallery, 'Regrowth in Women's Words' centers on nature-inspired work. The Mirmiran Art Gallery, in collaboration with O Gallery, exhibits modern miniature paintings rooted in Iranian traditions. Urban life takes the spotlight in 'City Through Her Eyes,' curated by Saeed Babavand in the Tabestan gallery.

In the Bahar space, Mojtaba Ghorbani has gathered contemporary ceramics for 'Women Ceramicists in Focus'. Meanwhile, the Namy gallery, in partnership with Gallery H, offers 'Life Through Women's Eyes,' a collection exploring everyday domesticity and emotion.

Baghban-Maher also announced that an additional wave of displays would launch on Friday, July 25, in cooperation with seven more private galleries, including Sohrab and Negar. New installations will include work by women sculptors and younger modernists.

The exhibition at the Iranian Artists Forum will run through August 1 and is open daily (except Saturdays) from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The opening phase of 'In Women's Words,' held at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, remains on view until September 22. Curated by Toka Maleki, Afsaneh Kamran, and Baghban-Maher, it features 125 pieces by 65 Iranian modernist women artists,



including Monir Farmanfarmaian, Behjat Sadr, Iran Darroudi, and Fereydoon Lashai.

The museum show draws entirely from its archives and includes rare and pre-

viously unseen works in abstraction, portraiture, and social realism. A bilingual catalogue, lectures, and parallel gallery shows are planned throughout the summer.

Works by Iran, Afghanistan women artists showcased at ECO Cultural Institute in Tehran



Arts & Culture Desk

A week-long exhibition featuring works by 24 women artists from Iran and Afghanistan opened on Thursday, July 24, at the ECO Cultural Institute in northern Tehran, the organization said in a statement.

Titled 'Voices in Color,' the exhibition brings together contemporary painting and callig-

raphy-painting by members of the Qalamo (Brush) Association, a regional arts initiative, IRNA reported.

Hosted at the institute's Diplomatic Hall, the event is part of broader efforts by the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to promote cultural dialogue and regional solidarity through the arts.

Asad Majid Khan, Secretary-General of ECO, attended the opening ceremony, which also featured poetry readings by Afghan author and poet Seyed Zia Qasemi and prominent Iranian poet Fahimeh Dehghan. Both guests contributed original work, drawing applause from the packed hall.

"Art is a shared language among the women of the ECO region," said Saad Khan, president of the ECO Cultural Institute.

He described art as a "borderless" medium that helps build bridges of understanding and peace among nations.

The program also included remarks from Ja'far Shiralinia, a historian and cultural scholar, who highlighted the growing role of women in shaping the cultural landscape of the region. "Women artists carry forward heritage while also redefining it," he said.

The exhibition runs daily from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. through July 30 at the ECO Cultural Institute, in Tehran.

Iranian play 'Confusion' heads to Georgian theater festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian stage production 'Confusion,' written and directed by Mohammad Amin Sadi, will be performed on July 28 at the Regional International Theatre Festival in Poti, Georgia.

The play, an adaptation of French author Joël Egloff's novel 'L'Étourdissement,' will represent Iran at the festival alongside 10 other productions from France, Romania, Georgia, and Lithuania.

Staged by Tehran-based Amits Theater Group, 'Confusion' will be performed at 3:00 p.m. in the State Professional Theater Hall in Poti.

The production has already logged over 70 performanc-

es in Tehran and gained national attention for its nominations in directing, acting, costume, and makeup design at Iran's prestigious Fajr International Theater Festival.

The international poster for the show was designed by Hamed Farahi. The cast includes Fardin Rahmanpour and Sahar Ghassemi, who performs in form and shadow roles.

Sadi described the piece as a "loose adaptation" that blends French dramatic literature with a local theatrical language. The work explores states of mental and social disorientation—"confusion"—through movement, silence, and fragmented storytelling.

The Regional Theater Fes-



tival in Poti, now in its latest edition, brings together emerging and established companies from across Europe and beyond, aiming to foster "regional dialogue" through the performing arts.

Two Iranian films to hit screens at Venice Days sidebar

Arts & Culture Desk

Two Iranian films have been selected for the 22nd edition of Venice Days, an independent sidebar of the Venice Film Festival, the Italian Directors' Guild announced on Thursday.

The Venice Days program, modeled on Cannes' Directors' Fortnight, will run from August 27 to September 6 and offers a platform for auteur-driven cinema with strong artistic vision. This year's lineup features two works by Iranian filmmakers that reflect themes of displacement, memory, and identity, ISNA reported.

'Past Future Continuous,' a documentary co-directed by Firouzeh Khosrovani and Morteza Ahmadvand, follows a woman no longer living in Iran as she maintains a delicate connection with her family back home. The storytelling unfolds through a unique form of communication, exploring absence and belonging in a deeply personal way.

Also selected is 'Inside Amir,' a feature by Iranian director Amir Azizi. The film portrays a young man on the cusp of emigration, weaving through Tehran's urban landscape on his bicycle. As he spends his final days with family and



friends, the story drifts between the present and "fragments of the past" through flashbacks and phone calls.

Described as a "love letter to Tehran," the film meditates on the emotional tug-of-war before leaving one's homeland.

The Venice Days (Giornate degli Autori) section, launched in 2004, has become a hub for bold voices in world cinema. Iranian cinema, often lauded for its poetic realism and social insight, remains a steady presence in European festivals.

Talks with E3 ...

Regardless, the talks must continue—whether with the Americans or the E3—to avoid handing the United States and Israel any pretext for renewed provocations against Iran. Thus, while diplomacy is indeed useful, military readiness must not be compromised, especially to deter a fresh Israeli adventurism.

The US and the EU are playing their usual "good cop, bad cop" routine. When negotiations between Tehran and Washington collapse, the Europeans step in, seemingly to buy time, all the while allowing the US and Israel space to prepare for

potential military action. The EU's current posture may have been designed to keep Iran busy with talks, while paving the way for more pressure from Tel Aviv and Washington.

However, Iran will not, under any circumstances, back down from its key stances in these negotiations—namely, continuing uranium enrichment and maintaining the integrity of its nuclear fuel cycle. These remain non-negotiable.

Adjustments to Iran's foreign policy approach vis-à-vis the European parties—and potentially the US—must be placed on the Foreign Ministry's agenda. Talks should

proceed, but on Iran's terms. As the nation that emerged victorious from the 12-day aggression, Iran should enter these negotiations with its status recognized accordingly. The E3 and the US must factor this reality into their approach.

Meanwhile, Iran must also launch a new round of diplomatic outreach, aiming to foster common ground with Islamic and Arab nations. The Foreign Ministry must elevate the global discourse on the aggressive policies of the Israeli regime in Syria, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and particularly against Iran. These concerns must be forcefully brought to the world stage.