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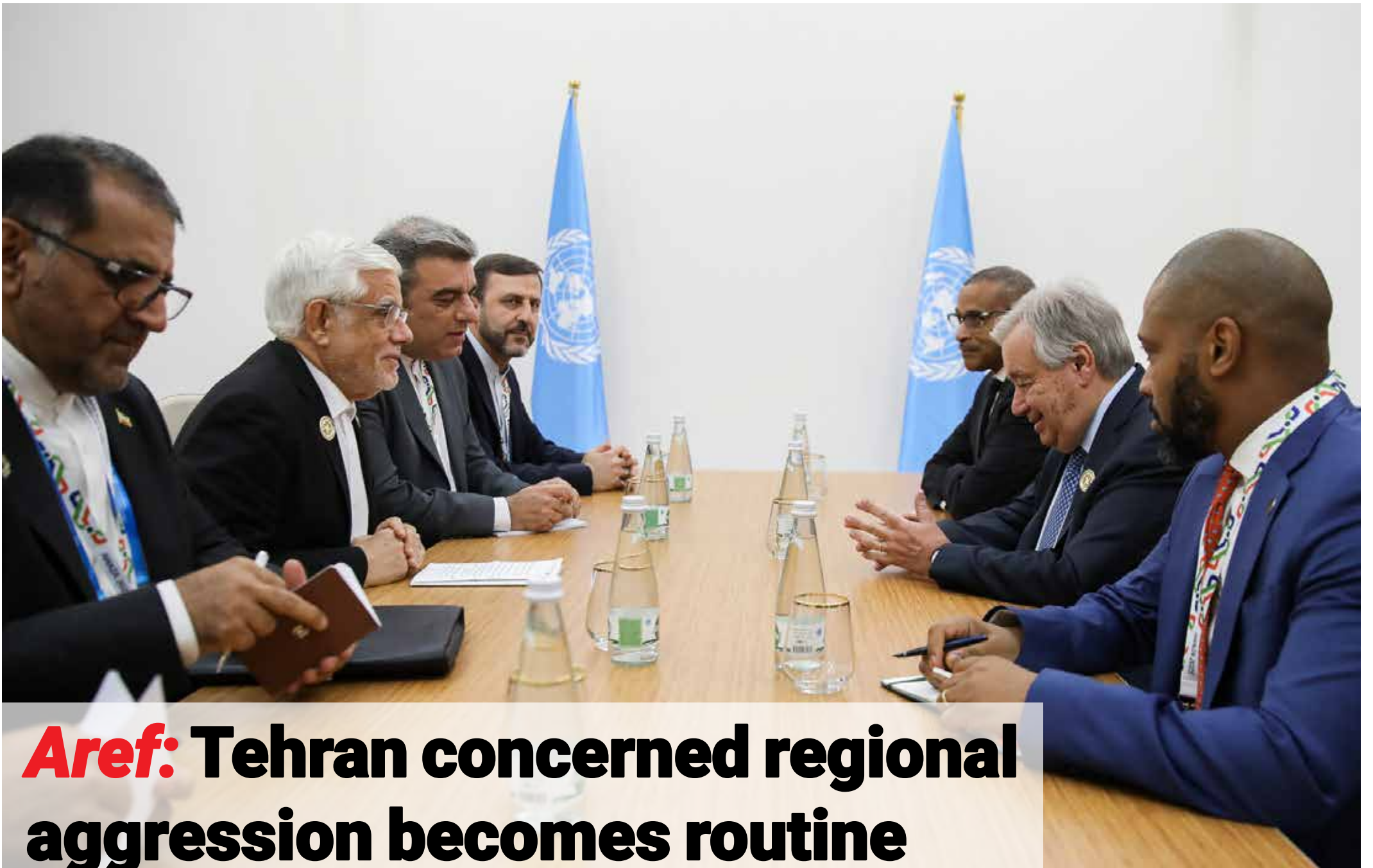
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Aref: Tehran concerned regional aggression becomes routine

UN chief raps US-Israel onslaught against Iran as 'illegal'

International Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Tuesday that Iran is concerned that acts of aggression against countries, like the July US-Israel's strikes on Iran, may become routine and destabilize the West Asia region.

"If the United Nations had taken more appropriate action, we would not be witnessing these events and tragedies in Palestine and Gaza today," Aref told the UN Secretary General António Guterres in a meeting held in Awaza, Turkmenistan, where they participated in the Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

"We expect the United Nations to actively take effective measures and increase its support to deter the Zionist regime. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always declared its cooperation and assistance to the United Nations in pursuit of establishing peace in the world, and we expect that the Iranophobia policy being pursued by the West will be condemned by the United Nations," Iran's vice president said.

The UN secretary general called the strikes by Israel and the US on Iran "illegal and in violation of international law."

He stressed that the issue of Iran's



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (L) shakes hands with UN Secretary General António Guterres in a meeting in Awaza, Turkmenistan, on August 5, 2025.

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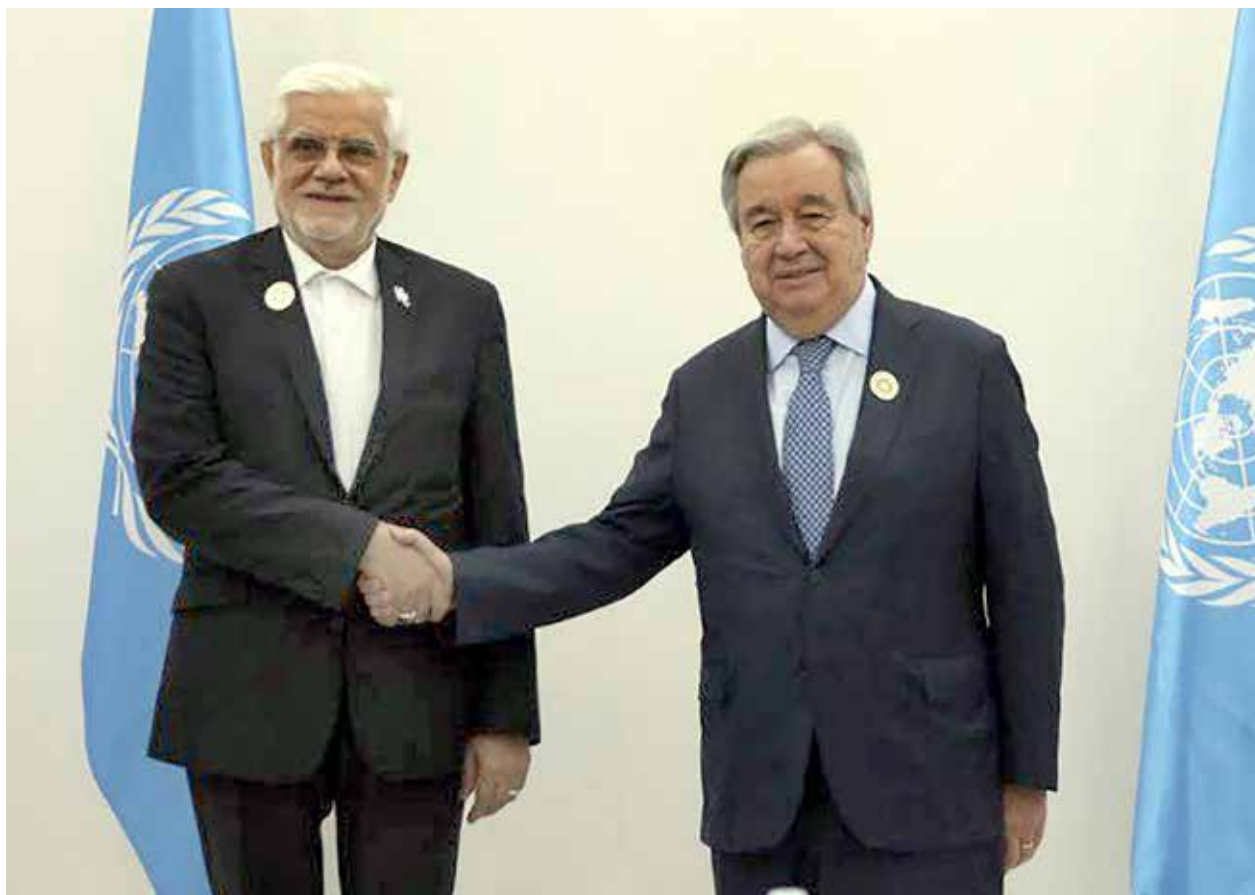
nuclear program should be resolved through diplomatic means, saying, "We are prepared to make use of all the UN's capacities to help settle Iran's nuclear issue diplomatically." On June 13, the Israeli regime assaulted Iran by attacking several civilian, military, and nuclear facilities. The regime's strikes killed nearly 1,100 Iranians, including civilians and top military commanders, and wounded 5,750 people.

On June 22, the US joined the Isreal's aggression and attacked three Iranian nuclear facilities.

Israel's aggression on Iran came two days before the sixth round of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the US.

"The United States, by supporting the Zionist regime and even directly intervening in this aggression and attack on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities, torpedoed the negotiation table," Aref said in his address to the international conference.

He said that Iran has never been the initiator of war, but it has confronted the aggressor with full force, de-



fended its territorial integrity, and is pursuing compensation for the dam-

age caused by the aggression against the people and the country's devel-

opment infrastructure through legal and international bodies.

President appoints Larijani head of top security body

National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday appointed Ali Larijani, a senior adviser to Iran's Leader, as the secretary of the country's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).

In his decree, Pezeshkian asked Larijani to prioritize threats against national security to help the country achieve sustainable security at the national, regional, and international levels.

Larijani held the same top security position from 2005 to 2007 and was parliamentary speaker from 2008 to 2020. He now replaces Ali Akbar Ahmadian, who become SNSC sec-



Ali Larijani

retary in 2023.

On Sunday, Iran revived an Iraq war-era Defense Council to review defense plans and enhance the capabilities of its armed forces. Both the Defense Council and the SNSC are headed by Iran's president.

Iran intelligence forces nab MKO-linked sabotage team in Tehran

National Desk

Iran arrested three members of a cell affiliated with the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) in the southeastern capital for attempting to disrupt public order.

The suspects were detained by the country's intelligence forces in the county of Pakdasht, southeast of Tehran.

"Three members of MKO-linked sabotage cells who sought to disrupt public order and security were identified and arrested," Pakdasht's governor Mohammad Hassanpour said in a statement on Tuesday.

Hassanpour noted that enemies have always sought to hire individuals to perpetrate acts of violence and form sabotage teams, stressing that all three detainees are undergoing technical and specialized interrogations.

"The Judiciary and security forces will decisively deal with any criminal action against public security, and will not allow hostile elements to infiltrate [into the country] and operate," he said.

The arrests come after the execution late last month of two alleged long-term members of the terror outfit. They had been found



guilty of producing improvised mortars to attack civilians, homes and public institutions. The MKO has carried out numerous terrorist attacks against Iranian civilians and government officials over the past three decades. Out of the nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist attacks since the victory of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, about

12,000 have fallen victim to the acts of terror carried out by the MKO. The group was viewed by the European Union as a terrorist organization until January 2009, when the EU Council lifted the designation under immense pressure from political lobbies. The decision was followed by the United States in September 2012.

Israel considers full Gaza takeover amid rising hunger victims

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu favors a complete military takeover of Gaza, media reported.

Mediation between Israel and Palestinian resistance group Hamas has collapsed despite intense international pressure for a cease-fire to ease hunger and appalling conditions in the besieged Palestinian territory. Eight more people died of starvation or malnutrition on Tuesday, Gaza's health ministry said, while another 79 died in the latest Israeli fire.

Netanyahu was to meet military affairs minister Israel Katz and military chief of staff Eyal Zamir to decide on a strategy to take to cabinet later this week, an Israeli official told Reuters.

Israel's Channel 12, citing an official from Netanyahu's office, said the prime minister was leaning towards taking control of the entire territory. That would reverse a 2005 decision to pull settlers and military out of Gaza while retaining control over its borders, a move right-wing parties blame for Hamas gaining power there. It was unclear, however, whether Netanyahu was foreseeing a prolonged occupation or a short-term operation freeing Israeli hostages.

"It is still necessary to complete the defeat of the enemy in Gaza, release our [captives] and ensure that Gaza never again constitutes a threat to Israel," Netanyahu told new recruits at a military base. "We are not giving up on any of these missions."



● AFP

A Palestinian official said the threat of a full takeover of Gaza may be a tactic to pressure Hamas into concessions, while the Palestinian Foreign Ministry urged foreign nations to take heed of the reports.

"The ministry urges countries and the international community to treat these leaks with utmost seriousness and to intervene urgently to prevent their implementation, whether these leaks are meant to exert pressure, test international reactions, or are genuine and serious," it said.

Israel's cabinet, the most right-wing and conservative in its history, includes far-right politicians who advocate for the annexation of both Gaza and the West Bank and encourage Palestinians to leave their homeland.

Nearly two years of fighting in Gaza has strained the military, which has a small standing army and has had to repeatedly mobilize reservists. It has

throughout the war pushed back against the idea of Israel fully occupying Gaza.

In a sign of differences between some members of Israel's ruling coalition and the military, far-right security minister Itamar Ben Gvir on X challenged military head Zamir to state he would comply with cabinet directives even if a decision was made to take all of Gaza.

Israel's onslaught on Gaza has devastated the tiny, crowded region and has killed more than 61,000 people - mostly civilians - according to Palestinian health authorities.

Israel's campaign has forced nearly all of Gaza's over 2 million people from their homes and caused what a global hunger monitor called last week an unfolding famine.

Some 188 Palestinians, including 94 children, have died from hunger since the war began in October 2023, according to Gaza authorities.

VP says Iran’s transit hits record 20m tons via regional cooperation

Economy Desk

Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref stated at an international conference of landlocked developing countries in Turkmenistan that his country’s achievement of a record 20 million tons of transit cargo is the result of close cooperation with regional countries. At the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) in Awaza, Aref noted that eight neighboring countries of Iran constitute one-quarter of the world’s 32 landlocked developing countries, all of which maintain close bilateral and multilateral transit interactions with Iran. “The Islamic Republic’s access to open waters, coupled with its adjacency and proximity to these countries, has created valuable mutual opportunities,” he added. Addressing the conference held on Tuesday with the participation of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres and heads of state and officials from various countries, Aref said Iran reached the record of 20 million tons of transit cargo last year (began on March 20, 2024), attributing the success to close collaboration

with regional nations. He added that the country has “accelerated and simplified the transit process by implementing digital management and electronic exchange of transport documents.” According to the vice president, customs cooperation and reducing clearance times are among other areas that have received attention. Formulating a roadmap for transportation cooperation with regional landlocked countries is another measure that could strengthen these collaborations. “The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a key transit nation, plays a pivotal and strategic role in connecting the three major continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe,” he said, adding that the country’s “unique and strategic geographical position has provided suitable opportunities for landlocked countries in the region to access open waters and expand their trade.” “To this end, strengthening transportation corridors passing through Iran along the North-South and East-West routes has been a priority in the country’s development programs, and extensive capacities have been prepared for trans-

Iran’s First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref addresses the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Awaza, Turkmenistan, on August 5, 2025. [fvpresident.ir](#)

portation development in Iran,” he said.

Openness to foreign investment

Referring to the country’s transportation capacity, Aref stated that through investments made, Iran now possesses “a transportation capacity including 15,000 kilometers of railway network, over 250,000 kilometers of various roads, 16 commercial sea-ports in the north and south of the country, more than 167 customs centers nationwide, and over 54 commercial airports, ready to receive and cooperate in transportation with regional countries, particularly neighbors and landlocked nations.” He declared that Iran welcomes “both joint and independent foreign investment.”

Readiness to establish logistics centers

The vice president announced the country’s readiness to establish logistics and transit



centers in southern ports for the neighboring landlocked countries. Aref stated that Iran, with its access to open waters through the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, and the Indian Ocean, and serving as Turkmenistan’s gateway to Central Asia and the Caucasus, plays a vital role in the transit of goods and energy for landlocked countries.

The presence of transit ports such as Chabahar and Bandar Abbas, along with international North-South and East-West road and rail corridors, enables the connection of countries in the region to global markets. “Within the framework of multilateral cooperation, including the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Ashga-

bat Agreement, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and other regional and international multilateral agreements, Iran strives to cooperate with Central Asian and Caucasus countries to create the necessary and favorable conditions for sustainable development in the transportation sector,” he concluded.

NIPC announces plans to fetch \$100b investment in petchem projects



Economy Desk

A senior official from the National Iranian Petrochemical Company (NIPC) announced on Tuesday that the total required investment for 144 licensed projects in the strategic industry is approximately \$100

billion, reporting on plans to attract domestic and foreign investment in the sector. Investment Manager of the NIPC, Hamidreza Ajami, announced plans to attract domestic and foreign investment in the industry, emphasizing, “Completing semi-finished projects

and developing the petrochemical value chain requires diverse solutions to overcome financial and currency challenges,” IRNA reported. Ajami said that petrochemical development plays a significant role in the country’s economic, social, and national security, and relying solely on domestic investment leads to limited growth. To increase competitiveness in global markets, attracting foreign investors must also be on the agenda. He pointed out that 25% of the country’s non-oil exports and 19% of its industrial value-added returns are provided by the petrochemical sector. He reminded that the industry, with advanced technology, is not only the intermediary link between the upstream oil sector and downstream industries but also serves as a major factor in job creation and entrepreneurship within the country. According to the official, over \$87 billion has been invested in the petrochemical industry from 1978 to 2022. Nineteen percent of the figure originated from foreign sources, and

over 11% came from the National Development Fund and other domestic and foreign resources. He noted that \$22 billion in new investment is also projected for the Seventh Development Plan, stating, “Currently, some of these projects have become operational, and we are striving to complete the remaining projects.” Elaborating on the current status of petrochemical projects, Ajami added, “Out of the total 144 projects, 20 projects with \$11 billion investment have achieved over 70% progress; 32 projects with \$22 billion are between 20% and 70% complete; and 92 projects with \$67 billion have less than 20% physical progress.” The investment manager emphasized the necessity of attracting foreign investment, stating, “Recently, within a memorandum of understanding with the Investment Organization and Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, it was agreed that opportunities in this industry would be introduced to international investors more than ever before. Additionally, leveraging the capacity of

BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization for developing collaborations is being pursued.” He referred to the petrochemical industry’s resilience against sanction pressures, noting, “Despite international difficulties, the path of project implementation through domestic resources and foreign credit lines has continued, and a number of projects will become operational this year.” Ajami listed the most significant investment attractions in Iran’s petrochemical industry as the availability of legal and supportive infrastructure, a large domestic and regional market, access to open waters, specialized human resources, and the technological capacity of knowledge-based companies. He pointed to completing semi-finished projects, developing mid-stream and downstream projects, flare gas collection, and increasing foreign currency generation as the main investment priorities of the company, emphasizing the simultaneous use of experiences from both domestic and foreign partnerships.

FAO stresses boost in cooperation with Iran in agriculture, livestock

Economy Desk

The representative of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Iran announced the exploration of potential areas for cooperation with Iran in the fields of agricultural and livestock health, such as designing training courses and specialized capacity building. During a visit to one of the subsidiaries of the Agriculture Ministry, Farrukh Toirov, the FAO representative in Iran, emphasized the vital role of vaccine production in

preserving the health of the food production cycle, Mehr reported. He stated that the in-house scientific capacity and existing indigenous knowledge in Iran constitute a valuable asset, beneficial not only for Iran but also for the people of the region. The FAO representative highlighted the close interconnection between human, animal, and environmental health, stressing the importance of the “One Health” approach, which is a shared priority for both FAO and the World

Health Organization (WHO). In this regard, he clarified that FAO is currently preparing and presenting a joint proposal within the framework of the “One UN” approach. “This initiative involves the participation of organizations such as FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, as well as national entities including the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, and the Department of Environment. The aim is to strengthen joint cooperation in addressing common health threats among humans, animals, and the environment,

Toirov added. The official further announced FAO’s readiness to explore areas of cooperation, including designing training courses and specialized empowerment. He added that providing a list of priority educational and research topics could be an effective step for planning and expanding collaborations. During the meeting, the importance of international cooperation to combat hunger and enhance global food security through science and innovation was also emphasized.



Lessons from Ismail Haniyeh's assassination



People hold up the Palestinian and Iranian flags and a portrait of assassinated Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh during a rally at Tehran University, Iran, on July 31, 2024. ● AFP

By Majid Sajadi Panah
University professor

O P I N I O N

Thursday marked the anniversary of the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau — an influential figure who, on July 31, 2024, during an official visit to Tehran to attend the inauguration ceremony of Iran's new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, was taken out in a terrorist attack. The operation was reportedly carried out via a remotely triggered explosive device, planted roughly two months before the incident in his hotel room. However, some sources claim a guided projectile with seven kilograms of explosives was fired from outside the building. This act once again lays bare the recurring pattern of the Israeli regime in physically eliminating key figures. Although execution methods may differ, the nature of these killings clearly stacks up with previous assassinations — ranging from scientists to military commanders. This pattern largely relies on exploiting intelligence infiltration and security vulnerabilities of the target country.

Triangle of assassination
In all assassinations orchestrated by the Israeli regime, three constants stand out:

- **Precise targeting:** selecting highly influential individuals with minimal collateral fallout.
- **Striking at vulnerable moments:** such as killing at the victim's residence or during official movements.
- **Active intelligence infiltration:** gaining sensitive information through eavesdropping, cyber espionage, or insider cooperation.

Regarding Haniyeh's assassination, although official details remain unpublished, evidence points to the use of drones or local operations. What binds these operations is the enemy's

thorough understanding of security gaps.

Wake-up call?
After this killing, one would expect the country's security systems to undergo serious structural reviews. Yet subsequent assassinations, including some military commanders, highlighted that fundamental reforms have either lagged behind or fallen short. Had the breaches that led to Haniyeh's assassination been promptly identified and patched, many later damages might have been sidestepped. Thus, on this anniversary, we not only honor his memory and legacy but must also clamp down on the enemy's assassination cycle with security, intelligence, and strategic responses — steps thankfully now underway. By the Leader's order, security structure reform is on the agenda, and implementation has begun. The appointment of seasoned and political figures like Ali Larijani is seen within this framework. This remembrance also gives us a chance to revisit 21st-century new assassination technologies such as the Lavender system:

Today, robotics, artificial intelligence, and digital surveillance have turned the traditional concept of assassination on its head. Terror operations no longer require physical human agents; They can be carried out remotely, automatically, and without human decision-making. Tools like spyware, robotic guns, killer drones, and smart systems like Israel's Lavender cover the whole ground — from identifying targets to executing attacks — with speed, precision, and minimal traces. In light of breathtaking technological advances, targeted assassinations have stepped into a new era. Gone are the days of spies wearing black hats and using silencers. Now, a single assassination can be pulled off thousands of kilometers away with just a few clicks (as with the killing of Martyr Fakhrizadeh). At the heart of this radical shift is the Lavender system — an automated digital killing machine developed by Israel that has forever changed warfare. Lavender acts as an advanced artificial brain that can whip up a kill decision within seconds. By gathering vast data — from phone calls and GPS locations

to social media activities — it analyzes behavior patterns. Each individual is given a "risk score" from 0 to 100. Anyone scoring above 85 is likely to make the blacklist. What makes Lavender truly frightening is its speed and scale. In a recent operation in Gaza, it managed to size up over 37,000 people in a short period. For comparison, traditional human analysts might be able to process only dozens in a month, but Lavender does it in minutes. However, the key problem is that the system is not foolproof. Reports show that one in five targeting decisions may be wrong. Imagine someone becoming a target just because they had a phone call with a blacklisted person. Doctors, journalists, or ordinary citizens might wind up caught in these errors. The bigger worry is that no one takes responsibility for these mistakes. When an algorithm decides to kill, no specific person can be blamed. This is exactly what international legal experts have flagged up. Current laws of war are not designed for such scenarios. Israel is not the only country using such tech. The US, China,

and the UK have similar systems, but Lavender appears far more advanced in many respects. It's even integrated with other systems like Gospel, which selects the appropriate weapon for the attack. What lies ahead? Some experts warn future versions may be fully automated, eliminating even the 20-second human confirmation delay. Imagine a war where robots make kill decisions without any oversight. This real nightmare could soon become reality. The international community stands at a crossroads: Should we allow machines to decide who lives or dies, or should new laws be enacted to put the brakes on such technologies? The answer may well shape humanity's future. In conclusion, Lavender isn't just a complex computer system. It's a mirror reflecting the future of war — a future where the lines between humans and machines blur out. The pressing question remains: Are we and our country ready for such a future?

The article first appeared in Persian on Fesad News.



● ARMINE SHAHBAYAN/EVN REPORT

Thus, on this anniversary, we not only honor Ismail Haniyeh's memory and legacy but must also clamp down on the enemy's assassination cycle with security, intelligence, and strategic responses — steps thankfully now underway. By the Leader's order, security structure reform is on the agenda, and implementation has begun. The appointment of seasoned and political figures like Ali Larijani is seen within this framework.

Palestinian Authority, ‘boiling frog’ theory

By Ahmed Al-Atawneh
Director of Ru'ya Center for Political Development

OPINION

On July 23, the Israeli Knesset voted to impose Sovereignty over the West Bank. This vote also re-emphasized its rejection of any form of Palestinian political entity between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. This marks the first time since the 1993 Oslo Accords that the Israeli Knesset has taken legal steps to annex West Bank territories. This effectively re-confirms the formal, not just practical, disregard for the Oslo Agreement. This move is not isolated. It's part of a long-standing policy to alter the reality on the ground in the West Bank. The pace of these measures has significantly increased with the current fascist cabinet in Tel Aviv, composed of right-wing and far-right elements, taking power. What demands attention is the behavior of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) — both leadership and institutions — towards the reality imposed by the occupation.

'Boiling frog'

This behavior brings to mind the popular “boiling frog” theory. A frog in a pot of water fails to recognize, or tries to deny, the gradual change in the water's temperature. It continues to adapt until the water reaches the boiling point, which it cannot tolerate, leading to its death from an inability to jump out due to collapsed strength. Had it sensed the danger of rising temperature from the start, it might have jumped out and saved itself. What the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah calls “the policy of removing pretexts” is merely self-delusion. They believe survival is possible by adapting to continuous change. The series of measures taken by successive Israeli cabinets will inevitably undermine not only a political solution and the two-state solution but also eliminate the PA and the Palestinian political institutions. Some believe these institutions died long ago, killed by the occupation, but are kept from burial to distract Palestinians and parts of the international community, perpetuating self-deception. The Palestinian political leadership, at various levels, suffers from a set of issues that have led to overall weakness in its role and performance. This has also facilitated the occupation cabinet's implementation of extreme policies and the imposition of facts on the ground. Aging is a primary characteristic of the political establishment; Most of its political leaders are in their twilight years. Institutions have not renewed their legitimacy or composition for decades. In some cases, political leaders, faction cadres, and even the Palestinian people are unaware of the number or identities of their members. Any leadership changes or creation of new positions within the “political system” are often driven by external demands or the hope of attracting financial support, rather than genuine development or change. The extent of external dictates has been evident in several recent changes.



President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mahmoud Abbas
● THOMAS LEVINSON/THE DAILY BEAST

This institutional and leadership aging has led to an inability to perform even minimal administrative and functional duties, let alone political and national ones. This includes an inability to pay employee salaries and a reduction of working hours in PA institutions to a minimum. There is general confusion in the performance of national and private sector institutions, bringing the Palestinian administrative and institutional situation to the brink of complete collapse. Perhaps the most dangerous outcome of this leadership state is the profound inability to engage with major and pressing national issues. One rarely sees a serious stance or presence of the political leadership regarding the genocide, destruction, and starvation in the Gaza Strip. The practices of the occupation and settlers in the West Bank confirm the political and field absence of the PA and its various institutions. This performance has likely contributed to the increasing regional and international political marginalization of the Palestinian leadership, even on issues related to the Palestinian cause and its developments. It has become common for the Palestinian file to be discussed in regional and international meetings without Palestinian involvement.

'Clinical death'

This “clinical death” and all indicators of incapacitation and weakness come to a boiling point for all aspects and files of the Palestinian cause. The PA's behavior once again recalls the frog settling in boiling water. How can the PA and its leadership fail to grasp the lethal nature of the occupation's policies and actions on the ground? Many facts should have raised the temperature of the Palestinian political environment, triggered a red light, and called for fundamental and strategic solutions to the existing reality, rather than waiting until action becomes impossible under the guise of removing pretexts and dealing with the status quo: **1. Settlement expansion:** Settlement activity has swelled, with approximately 180 settlements and 215 outposts (candidates for conversion into settlements) recently. Tens of thousands of new housing units are under construction, and large areas of

land continue to be confiscated for various roads. Cabinet plans aim to double the number of settlers in the West Bank, with the current cabinet working to settle an additional one million, potentially raising the total to two million within years. This means the number of Zionist settlers and Palestinian citizens in the West Bank could become nearly equal. **2. Legal and administrative measures:** Tel Aviv has enacted a series of legal and administrative measures to consolidate its legal control over the West Bank. These include abolishing the Civil Administration's authority over settlements, canceling the classification of Area B, and transferring administrative and security powers to the occupation authorities. The powers of the “Coordinator” have been expanded, making him the de facto ruler of the West Bank, allowing citizens to deal directly with him on all matters. All land survey and classification (Tabu) procedures carried out by the PA have been canceled, with responsibility transferred to the occupation cabinet. Many other measures reinforce the occupation's direct presence and undermine the PA's limited functions. **3. Two-state solution abandonment:** The internal Zionist

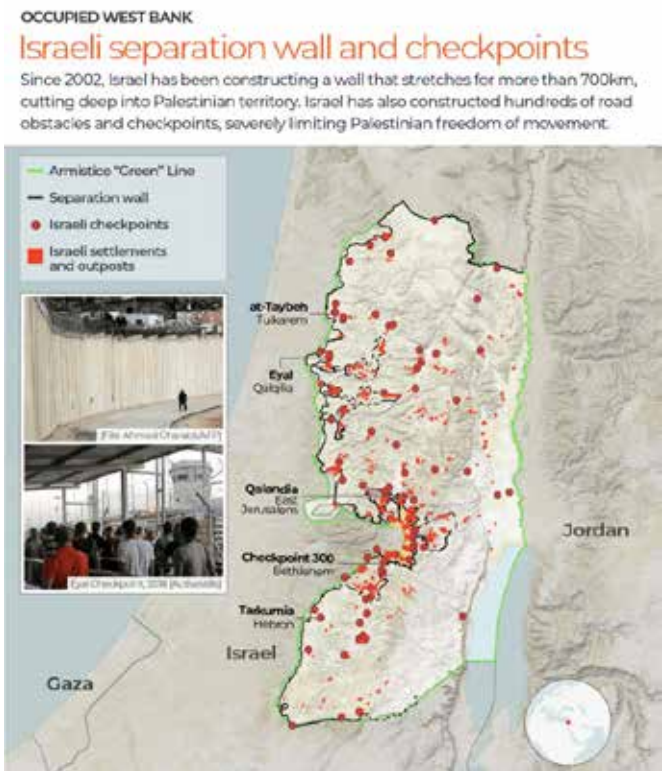
debate on the two-state solution and the idea of establishing any Palestinian political entity has been settled. This was achieved through two Knesset votes: One, by an overwhelming majority, rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state on the borders of June 4. The second affirmed “the right of the entity” to impose its sovereignty over all Palestinian territory, including the West Bank, and called on the cabinet to take necessary measures to impose sovereignty. This signifies the complete end of the Oslo political approach and the non-existence of any significant Israeli party that could be a partner in a political process or settlement. **4. Economic strangulation:** The occupation practices economic strangulation against the PA, pushing it into economic deficit. This prevents it from paying employee salaries or undertaking any economic or developmental projects. Israel currently withholds the equivalent of \$2.7 billion of PA funds and floods the market with Shekels without allowing exchange for foreign currencies, causing multifaceted economic crises. **5. Erosion of national image:** The PA's national image is being shattered by its forced compliance with steps considered

unpatriotic and rejected by the vast majority of the Palestinian people. These include halting salaries for prisoners and martyrs' families, accepting changes to Palestinian curricula that contain national constants and concepts rejected by the occupation, and intensifying “security coordination” and pursuing resistance fighters in the West, even extending to joint field operations as seen in Jenin and Tulkarm. **6. Assault on sanctities and values:** The occupation has deeply shed Palestinian blood, committing an ongoing genocide for the past two years. Tens of thousands have been brutalized in prisons using unprecedented methods of repression and torture. It has also overstepped all boundaries in dealing with holy sites, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Ibrahimi Mosque. **7. Undermining UN role:** Efforts are underway to undermine the UN's role in the Palestinian issue, particularly in the occupied territories. The occupation waged a real war on the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), restricting its activities in the West Bank and Gaza. It attempted to damage its professional reputation in an effort, with US support, to end the agency's role as a UN tool witnessing one of the most critical Palestinian issues and a symbol of its justice: the refugee issue. In the same context, it systematically destroyed refugee camps and attempted to empty them of their residents, citing resistance as a pretext. This led to the destruction of Jenin and Tulkarm camps and the displacement of many of their inhabitants.

Call for unity, action

All these measures, among others, are taking place before the eyes of the world without anyone taking action. Crucially, they are happening under the gaze of the PA. This leads observers to believe that the Palestinian political leadership and the PA are either deceiving themselves, hoping for safety based on removing pretexts and coexisting with reality, no matter how bad, or they are unaware of the reality and what is happening around them, in which case the disaster is even greater. It is imperative to sense the temperature of the surrounding environment and deal seriously with the complex and challenging reality, especially after the war of extermination in Gaza. There must be an immediate move towards the various Palestinian components, both political and societal, to formulate a responsible and serious national plan to confront this reality and open an opportunity for the Palestinian people to face these challenges united. The Palestinian people are experienced and resilient, needing only a believing and capable leadership. This will help galvanize remaining allies and friends of the Palestinian people to stand with them against this arrogant and fascist enemy because waiting will benefit no one and only serve the occupation and its policies.

The article first appeared in Arabic on Al Jazeera and was translated into English by The Palestine Chronicle.



● AL JAZEERA

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Iran to face newcomer Guam in FIBA Asia Cup opener

Sports Desk

Iranian basketball national team will begin its bid for a fourth FIBA Asian Cup trophy against debutant Guam in Group B today at the King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah. Joining Iran and Guam in the group are two-time champion Japan and West Asian force Syria. Iran will take on Japan on Friday – in a repeat of a group encounter between the two teams in the 2022 edition, which Iran won 88-76 – before squaring off against Syria on Sunday. The top team in the group will secure direct qualification for the quarterfinal, while the runner-up will be given a second chance for a last-eight spot in a playoff round. Iran won five in six to finish above Qatar in the Group E of the qualifiers, with its single defeat coming through a 78-77 overtime setback against Qatar and former Iran coach Hakan Demir in Doha last November, in Greek head coach Sotirios Manolopoulos's first game in charge of Team Melli. Having won the flagship continental title on three occasions between 2007 and 2013, Iran will be looking for a fresh start under Manolopoulos, for whom the event in Jeddah will mark a first major tournament on Iran bench. Iran's most recent medal at the continental event came in 2017, where it settled for silver behind two-time reigning champion Australia, before an under-par campaign in the previous edi-



● FIBA

tion in 2022 saw Team Melli crash out in the quarterfinals at the hands of Jordan. Yet to win a medal in the competition since 1997, the Japanese, meanwhile, have risen as a formidable team in the continent, highlighted by successive appearances at the last two Olympics Games. Japan also had a decent run at

the FIBA World Cup on home soil two years ago, finishing with a 3-2 record in the classification round to qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Iran and Japan have built an Asian rivalry in recent years, with Friday's game marking the 11th encounter between the two sides in a FIBA tournament. Iran have won six of the last 10

duels, though Japan came out on top when they last met – a convincing 96-61 home victory during the second round of the 2023 World Cup Asian qualifiers at the Takasaki Arena in Gunma. Despite much of the attention being on Iran and Japan as to which will end up as the No. 1 team in Group B, Syria and Guam have much to prove in Jeddah.

The Syrians enter the competition on the back of a spirited run during the qualifiers, where they punched a ticket following a major turnaround in Window 3. After winning just once in its first four outings, Syria went on to beat the UAE 86-61, and then edged Bahrain 89-87 to sweep the window and return to the Asia Cup for the third time in a

row. Keron DeShields will be the man to watch in the Syrian roster as the American-born guard is set for his debut in a national team setting. Guam fell just short of reaching the 2022 event, courtesy of a heartbreaking defeat to Chinese Taipei in the qualifiers, but defeated Thailand in a final qualifying game in March to punch a first-ever ticket for the finals.

Mixed preparation

Power forward Arsalan Kazemi will headline the Iranian 12-man squad as the team captain, with forward Mohammad Amini, guard Sina Vahedi, point guard Mobin Sheikhi, and power forward Arman Zangeneh also expected to make significant contributions. Navid Rezaeifar, Mohammad Heidari, Matin Aqajanzpour, Mohammad Rahimi, Hassan Ali-Akbari, Salar Monji, and Seyyed Mahdi Jafari complete the Iranian roster in Jeddah. Iran's Asia Cup preparation suffered a major setback by the 12-day war with Israel in June, but Manolopoulos's men still managed to play in several warmup games before heading to Saudi Arabia. Iran played three games at the Beirut International Cup, losing to Egypt (60-59) and Lebanon (105-89) but salvaging a 70-61 win over Jordan in its final outing. Iran then visited Moscow for a couple of friendlies against Russia, winning the first game 70-67 before suffering a 79-58 loss in a final pre-Asia Cup game last week.

Iran international Mohebbi completes Kalba move

Sports Desk

Iran international winger Mohammad-Mahdi Mohebbi left Sepahan to join Ittihad Kalba in the Emirati ADNOC Pro League. Kalba had to pay a \$600,000 release clause to secure the signing of the 25-year-old Iranian, who enjoyed a prolific campaign with Sepahan last season, contributing nine goals and 10 assists in 37 appearances across all competitions, to help the club finish runner-up to Tractor in the Iranian top flight and book a spot at the AFC Champions League playoffs. Mohebbi will team up with fellow-Ira-

nians Shahriar Moghanlou, Saman Qoddous, Ahmad Nourollahi, who joined from Al Wahda last month, and young center-back Amirhossein Samdali at his new club. Kalba hopes Mohebbi will be a perfect replacement for Iranian winger Mahdi Qayedi, who registered 18 goals and eight assists last term to be shortlisted for the UAE Pro League's player-of-the-season prize before signing for Dubai-based club Al Nasr in July. An impressive season with Sepahan saw Mohebbi receive a first international callup by Iran head coach Amir Qalenei for June's double header against Qatar and North Korea at the

World Cup Asian qualifiers. Mohebbi was on the scoresheet and provided Mahdi Taremi with an assist as Iran defeated North Korea 3-0 in Tehran to finish atop the qualification group. His departure will be a massive blow for Sepahan and new head coach Moharram Navidkia ahead of the new season, which will get underway with a crunch visit to Qatari club Al Duhail in the AFC Champions League playoffs next Tuesday. The winner of the single-leg tie will progress to the West Region's league phase in the Asian elite clubs' competition.



● KALBA FC



Five Iranians secure spot at Karate World Championships

Sports Desk

Five Iranians have been guaranteed a place at the Final Phase Event of the Karate World Championships – starting November 27 in Cairo, Egypt – the World Karate Federation confirmed in a letter to the national governing body of the sport on Tuesday. Reigning Asian champion Atousa Golshadnejad secured her place in the women's -61kg event through the latest World Rankings. The world No. 4 will be joined

in the kumite competitions by fellow-Iranian girls Fatemeh Sa'adati and Sara Bahmanyar, who punched their Cairo tickets through continental berths. Sa'adati settled for a -55kg silver at the Asian Championships in May, while former world bronze medalist Bahmanyar stood third in the -50kg class in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The men's draw in the Egyptian capital will see Morteza Ne'mati and Mahdi Khodabakhshi vie for glory in the -75kg and -84kg contests, respectively.

Ne'mati finished runner-up to Kazakhstan's Nurkanat Azhikanov in the Asian showpiece to be handed a continental berth, while Khodabakhshi – a world silver medalist in 2023 – qualified through the World Rankings. The complete entry list for the Final Phase of the world event will be confirmed after the Qualification Tournament in Paris on October 17-19.

◀ L-R: Mahdi Khodabakhshi, Morteza Ne'mati, Sara Bahmanyar, Fatemeh Sa'adati, and Atousa Golshadnejad
● IKF

Mofakham Mansion showcasing millennia of culture, craftsmanship in North Khorasan

Iranica Desk

North Khorasan Province is a land that, nestled in the heart of its silent mountains and vast plains, embraces treasures of art and history — treasures found not only in ancient museum artifacts but also in the rhythms of the hands of women and men who still communicate with the world through the language of tradition. The historic Mofakham Mansion, a jewel of Qajar architecture in Bojnurd, now houses two important museums: the Archaeology Museum and the Anthropology Museum. This unique place brings together millennia-old narratives alongside living rituals and contemporary arts to present a richly layered portrayal of the culture and identity of the people of North Khorasan Province.

Archaeology Museum

The Archaeology Museum is located on the upper floor of the Mofakham Mansion and is organized into five main sections: Prehistoric, Historic, Islamic, Coins and Seals, and the Ceramics Center. The southern hall of this floor, the largest and most splendid space in the building, includes a conference hall used for meetings, gatherings, and specialized lectures, chn.ir wrote.

Prehistoric Section

This section showcases artifacts related to human life before the invention of writing (up to the fourth millennium BCE). Although archaeological research in North Khorasan Province is still developing, discoveries from sites such as Yam Hill of Faruj, Devin Hill, Arg-e Naderi Hill of Shirvan, Qal'eh Khan Hill, Ava in Samalqan, Heydaran Hill, Pahlevan Hill of Jajarm, and Qomari Hill of Esfarayen push back the timeline of human presence in this region by thousands of years. Among the most notable artifacts are burial remains, pottery vessels, and stone tools uncovered from



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Qal'eh Khan Hill (excavated in 2007).

Historical and Islamic sections

These sections illustrate the evolution of culture and civilization in the region, tracing the development from early historical periods through the Islamic eras. Exhibits include glazed pottery, seals, jewelry, manuscript fragments, and architectural artifacts — each bearing witness to the cultural, religious, and economic interactions of the people throughout different ages.

Coins and Seals

A diverse collection of historical coins and seals spanning the

Achaemenid to the Safavid and Qajar periods is displayed in Coins and Seals Section. These objects hold not only material value but also serve as vital historical records of Iran's political, economic, and artistic heritage.

Ceramics Preservation Center

Established to protect, restore, and introduce ceramic artifacts, this center manages the specialized study and registration of ceramic finds uncovered within the province.

Anthropology Museum

Situated on the ground floor of the Mofakham Mansion, the An-



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thropology Museum is a dynamic and colorful space intimately connected to the craftsmanship of North Khorasan Province's artists. Through exhibits of local occupations, rituals, and traditional productions — ranging from weaving and felting to ceremonial tablecloths and regional clothing — it reconstructs a vivid portrait of the everyday and spiritual life of the indigenous people of the province.

Chadorshab: Chadorshab is a traditional fabric featuring distinctive checkered and striped patterns, woven on a two-shaft or four-shaft loom known as Maku, with widths between 40 and 50 centimeters. Primarily

produced in home workshops, this fabric is a feminine heritage passed down from grandmother to daughter, and from daughter to granddaughter. More than a textile, Chadorshab symbolizes kindness, patience, and the skilled artistry of women at the core of the households. This craft, alongside other handmade textiles such as towels, scarves, and ceremonial tablecloths, breathes life into the province's indigenous weaving traditions.

Felting: Felting is one of the province's traditional crafts that is gradually fading, though it formerly flourished throughout the region. As demand declined, felting is now practiced mainly on a

limited scale, largely for decorative handicrafts. The raw material consists of wool from domesticated animals like sheep and camels, which is transformed into felt through kneading and compressing under specific conditions. Prominent felt products include floor mats, felt hats, and felt jackets, traditionally worn by shepherds.

Ceremonial tables: In every civilization and culture, the rituals surrounding eating and drinking serve as expressions of values and identities. In North Khorasan Province, ceremonial tables — from the national Haft-Sin to votive tables — play an active symbolic role within ceremonies and rituals, reflecting faith and human connection. These tables are more than mere places for consumption; they represent core symbols of belief, unity, and communal participation.

Foods: Alongside its traditional arts and museum treasures, North Khorasan Province is renowned for foods imbued with nostalgic flavors. One of the most celebrated dishes is Nokhod-Ashi, a traditional, healthy, plant-based soup (Ash in Persian) made from chickpeas, cracked wheat, spinach, onions, and local spices. This soup — characterized by its yellowish-green hue and the fragrance of mountain herbs — holds a special place on ceremonial tables and during local festivities. This beloved dish was officially registered on Iran's National Heritage List, preserving not merely a recipe, but a portion of the culinary and cultural memory of the people of this region.

The Mofakham Mansion, as the host of this rich tangible and intangible heritage, is far more than a historic building; it is the beating heart of North Khorasan's culture — a heart that still pulses for the past while gazing confidently toward the future.

Health tourism; a catalyst for sustainable growth in Iran

Iranica Desk

In recent years, Iran's tourism industry has confronted a broad spectrum of structural challenges, compounded by international sanctions and economic volatility. These complex circumstances, alongside the ever-evolving international landscape, have underscored the urgent need to reassess current approaches and to redefine the roles of specialized institutions within the sector. Mostafa Mousavi, head of the Iran-Vietnam Joint Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Board of Representatives of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, highlighted in a commentary published by IRNA that the tourism sector — once regarded as one of the key pillars of the nation's non-oil economy — has now found itself under intense domestic and international pressures. In this strained context, only meticulous planning combined with a pragmatic and

realistic vision can foster hope for the sector's reconstruction and sustainable development. Within this framework, health tourism emerges as a particularly promising sub-sector. As a low-cost, export-oriented, and relatively sanction-resilient branch of the tourism industry, it holds significant potential to drive transformative growth and sustainable progress. Beyond its economic value, health tourism also occupies a strategic cultural and diplomatic position, serving as a powerful instrument to enhance Iran's national image and broaden its international engagements. Neighboring and regional countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Central Asian republics, and nations in Southeast Asia face serious healthcare challenges and have urgent needs for affordable, high-quality medical services. Iran, endowed with diverse medical expertise, well-equipped hospitals, and competitive pricing, has in recent years

secured an important foothold as a preferred medical tourism destination. Nonetheless, realizing success in this sector demands the establishment of a coherent structural framework, seamless coordination between governmental bodies and private stakeholders, and the development of comprehensive, standardized service packages. These packages must ensure a safe, comfortable, and trustworthy experience for foreign patients throughout their medical journey. In this regard, specialized tourism commissions — especially the Tourism Commission of the Iran Chamber of Commerce — play a critical role in shaping policy, fostering coordination, and steering strategic planning at the highest levels. By expanding its mandate beyond traditional functions, the Tourism Commission can serve as a collaborative platform that promotes synergy among the diverse players in the tourism industry and focuses on

actionable projects that catalyze tangible advancements in health tourism. Complementing the role of the commission, joint chambers operate as vital international intermediaries for the private sector, possessing substantial capacity to identify target markets, build relationships with healthcare and tourism professionals in destination countries, organize orientation tours for doctors and patients, and streamline logistical arrangements. A robust partnership between the Tourism Commission and these joint chambers can give rise to a dynamic and integrated network dedicated to the development of health tourism — one that yields significant benefits for Iran's national economy while elevating its stature regionally and globally. Equally important is the attention to the cultural, linguistic, and social needs of foreign patients. Delivering ancillary services such as professional medi-



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cal interpreters, simplifying visa procedures, and providing comprehensive support from arrival through post-treatment phases are essential measures that enrich the health tourism experience and encourage returning patients to become unofficial ambassadors for Iran. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that the sustainable development of Iran's tourism industry cannot be achieved through slogans or conventional, formulaic programs. Instead, it requires structural reinvention, innovative capacity building, and the implementation of practical, goal-oriented projects. In the forthcoming period, the Tourism Commission — with a

pragmatic, network-driven, and project-centric approach — has the potential to assume a pivotal role in revitalizing the sector and positioning health tourism as the driving force behind this transformation. Such a transformation will not only benefit private sector stakeholders but will also serve as a catalyst for strengthening Iran's economic diplomacy and expanding its international cooperation across multiple arenas. Consequently, placing emphasis on health tourism opportunities and harnessing the capabilities of joint chambers must be regarded as strategic imperatives for the future of the country's tourism industry.



FM: Media-diplomacy coordination key to Iran's success

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) headquarters in Tehran and said close coordination between media and diplomacy is key to securing the country's national interests. Speaking at a meeting with IRIB chief Peyman Jebelli and the organization's top managers, Araghchi praised the broadcaster's "influential" role in supporting the diplomatic apparatus. He said stronger ties between the country's media, foreign policy establishment, and military field would ensure "power and progress" for Iran. The visit came ahead of Iran's National Journalists' Day (August 8). During the meeting, IRIB officials shared views on the broadcaster's role in shaping public understanding of foreign policy issues. Jebelli called the collaboration between diplomacy and media "vital for maintaining national security and sovereignty," and said IRIB would continue to play its part. Araghchi, who also attended the organization's deputy council session, paid tribute to journalists killed in conflict zones, particularly those who died during Israeli



military attacks. He called their determination to report facts professionally "crucial" to countering disinformation and controlling the narrative. Referring to what he called a "pivotal chapter" in Iran's recent history, the 12-day confrontation with Israel, Araghchi said its

success stemmed from tight coordination between the battlefield, diplomacy, and the media. "These three worked in tandem, complementing each other," he said. The foreign minister thanked Jebelli and his team for standing their ground and helping project Iran's positions globally. "It was a proud victory," he added.

Iran presses Iraq on water rights as wildfires escalate across border

Social Desk

Iran is pressing Iraq to cooperate on water-sharing and wildfire control, Vice President and Department of Environment chief Shina Ansari said Tuesday in Tehran. Ansari outlined the government's environmental priorities, from dust storm mitigation and waste reform to expanded international diplomacy, IRNA reported. Tehran is "in daily contact" with Baghdad, she said, urging continued coordination on water allocations and aerial firefighting support. The talks come amid repeated wildfires in Iraq and longstanding disputes over cross-border water flows. "We're closely following up on the issue of water rights," Ansari said. She added that previous joint firefighting efforts had been effective and "must continue." Iran's recent environmental diplomacy has notched a series of wins. The Ramsar Convention's regional center for West Asia—previously rumored to be relocated—will remain in Iran for another three years. Tehran

has also secured a seat on the Ramsar steering committee and obtained Ramsar certification for three wetlands: Gandoman, Kianshahr, and Babel Kala. Ansari, who has made four official trips abroad in the past year, said Iran's participation in high-level panels and bilateral meetings has "strengthened environmental diplomacy" and fostered wider regional cooperation. She also cited Iran's reengagement with the Convention on Biological Diversity as a sign of renewed global outreach. She acknowledged staffing shortages and budgetary constraints at home but said modernization and new technologies would help close the gap. The department is lobbying for broader oversight authority and stronger enforcement powers to implement existing environmental regulations. Ansari appealed to the public and media to "see the full picture" when evaluating the agency's performance. "Many of the duties lie with ministries such as energy, agriculture, and the interior," she said, noting their roles in addressing air pollution and land degradation.

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Mobarakeh Steel Company AGM:

Mobarakeh Steel Hot Rolling Mill No. 2, key step toward Iran's industrial development

Mobarakeh Steel Company held its Ordinary Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the fiscal year ending March 20, 2025, with 78.34% shareholder participation, where senior executives announced that the company's Hot Rolling Mill No. 2 has made significant headway as one of Iran's largest ongoing industrial projects. The meeting's agenda included presentation of the board of directors' report, auditor's statement, approval of the annual financial statements, appointment of an external auditor and statutory inspector, selection of a widely circulated newspaper for official disclosures, election of board members, and decisions on board compensation and non-executive directors' attendance fees. Shareholders approved a cash dividend of IRR 280 per share, totaling \$44.92 million, for the fiscal year. The AGM also approved an increase in the annual budget of the Sepahan Sports Club, from \$105.76 million to \$160.47 million.

Steel industry meets 2025 national vision targets

Chairing the AGM, Mohammad Aghajani, Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade and Chairman of the Board of IMIDRO, said Mobarakeh Steel remains "undoubtedly one of the greatest economic achievements of Iran," consistently ranking first in national economic rankings. He noted that the steel sector is the only Iranian industry to have already met the goals set for the country's Vision Plan 2025, attributing this to the efforts of "Iran's steel men," corporate collaboration, and shareholder support.

Iran among world's top steel producers

Mobarakeh Steel Group CEO Saeed Zarandi stated that Mobarakeh ranked 44th among global steelmakers in 2024, representing Iran on the international stage. He added that Germany, China, and India were also among the world's top players in the sector. Despite stable growth in previous years, Zarandi said production in 2024 fell by 1.78 million tons due to power and gas supply restrictions. He emphasized the urgent need for a review of national energy policies to ensure stable infrastructure support. **Key role in industrial development** Zarandi reported that Mobarakeh Steel's production capacity utilization has reached 60%, a benchmark reflecting the steel industry's movement toward higher efficiency and optimal use of production infrastructure. "One in every three tons of crude steel produced in the country comes from Mobarakeh," he said, underlining the company's strategic importance in Iran's industrial landscape.

In fiscal 2025, the company registered notable growth in key products: pellet output rose 18%, hot coil production increased by 3%, and galvanized and tin-coated sheet production grew by 22%.

Over 27mn tons exported, \$12bn in foreign currency earnings

Zarandi noted that Mobarakeh Steel's five-year sales trajectory (2020–2024) has shown continuous growth in flat and alloy steel products, both domestically and in export markets. Since inception, the company has exported over 27 million tons of steel, generating more than \$12 billion in foreign currency revenue. Domestic sales exceeded 156 million tons. In 2024 alone, sales of cold-rolled and coated products rose 40%, hot-rolled products climbed 21%, and slab sales increased 9%, pointing to the company's strategic focus on high value-added products.

Record-breaking logistics achievement

The company also set a new logistics record in 2024, transporting 8.504 million tons of finished goods, 7.549 million tons by road and 955,000 tons by rail.

Hot Rolling Mill No. 2, flagship project advances

Zarandi described the Hot Rolling Mill No. 2 project as the largest industrial construction underway in Iran and the company's most significant venture in the past decade. With an annual production capacity of 4.2 million tons of hot-rolled steel, the project reached 41.8% progress by March 2025 and 47.7% by end-July. The project had previously been stalled for nearly 10 months due to legal issues but resumed in May and is now targeted for monthly progress of 3%. The facility is expected to come online within 24

months.

The projected annual revenue is \$1.38 billion. The project will generate 940 direct jobs and cost \$358.96 million by year-end, with total expenditures expected to reach \$603.74 million.

Mobarakeh invests in value chain, cold rolling expansion

Zarandi announced the launch of the pickling line and continuous cold rolling mill (PLTCM) construction project, aimed at boosting productivity and capacity. With an annual output of 2 million tons, the project is forecast to bring in over \$552.41 million in revenue by 2028. It will create 300 direct jobs and cost \$256.14 million. The development aligns with the company's sustainability, self-sufficiency, and value chain integration goals.

Colored coil line for home appliances signals industry shift

The CEO noted that the company's color-coated coil production line, designed for home appliance applications, has reached 24.94% physical progress and will be completed within two years. It has a projected annual capacity of 300,000 tons, is expected to create 60 jobs, and bring in \$97.74 million per year starting in 2029. Zarandi added that Mobarakeh's alloy sheet rolling project, with an annual capacity of 500,000 tons, is also on track for completion by 2028. It is expected to employ 770 people directly and generate over \$777.27 million in revenue annually.

Sepahan S.C. beloved in Isfahan

Addressing shareholders, Zarandi reaffirmed his personal and corporate support for Sepahan Sports Club and its popular football team. "As I promised the people of Isfahan at the start of my tenure, we con-

tinue to support Sepahan, and we remain committed to solving the province's water issues through the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman water transfer projects," he said. "Sepahan is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people of Isfahan."

He noted that the club's board of directors was selected from within Mobarakeh Steel to ensure strict oversight of spending and added that financial performance audits will continue. The company also expects the club to extend its support beyond football into other sports disciplines.

Sea water transfer to Isfahan, strategic move for crisis

Zarandi described the sea water transfer project to Isfahan as a "strategic decision" aimed at addressing the province's long-standing water crisis, stating that Mobarakeh Steel has effectively assumed primary responsibility for executing the project's first phase, which extends from Sirjan to Mobarakeh County. "This project is specifically designed to supply water to industry," Zarandi said, noting that once fully operational, it will disconnect industrial water consumption in Isfahan Province from the Zayandehroud River. He called it "a positive step" toward the river's restoration, but cautioned that "true revitalization of the Zayandehroud will require much more," including managing upstream consumption and broader environmental measures. The Mobarakeh Steel CEO said the company has "devoted its full energy and resources" to resolving the province's water challenges, committing the largest investment among industrial players. He added that seawater has already reached Shahin Shahr and the Isfahan refinery. The southern branch of the project, 195



kilometers long, is dedicated to supplying Mobarakeh Steel, and only 9.5 kilometers of pipeline installation remain. "This means the project is nearly complete," he said.

Mobarakeh shoulders 42% of project responsibility

Zarandi revealed that approximately 805 kilometers of intensive pipeline work has been carried out. "We hope the project's completion will mark a significant step toward resolving Isfahan's water crisis," he said. Feasibility studies have already been conducted for the second phase, but the Ministries of Energy and Industry, along with other stakeholders, must weigh in before implementation moves forward. He added that Mobarakeh Steel has invited the University of Isfahan to study the project's social and economic impacts. Meanwhile, other industrial firms across the province have also submitted requests to connect to the seawater supply. "Though this project has been a cost center for three years," Zarandi said, "we hope it will generate revenue in the future." He emphasized that over the past eight years, Mobarakeh Steel has managed to reduce its water consumption for producing one kilogram of steel to just 2.5 liters through a series of conservation initiatives. The company has also tapped into treated wastewater from neighboring towns to support its operations. "Mobarakeh has fulfilled 42% of its commitment to the seawater transfer project," Zarandi said, noting that the company has also supplied steel sheets for pipeline manufacturing. "We've shouldered a major burden for the province and are now exploring similar long-term sustainability initiatives in water and power supply."