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Disarming Hezbollah would jeopardize security of Lebanon, entire region

By Mohammad Irani
Former Iranian ambassador to Lebanon

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

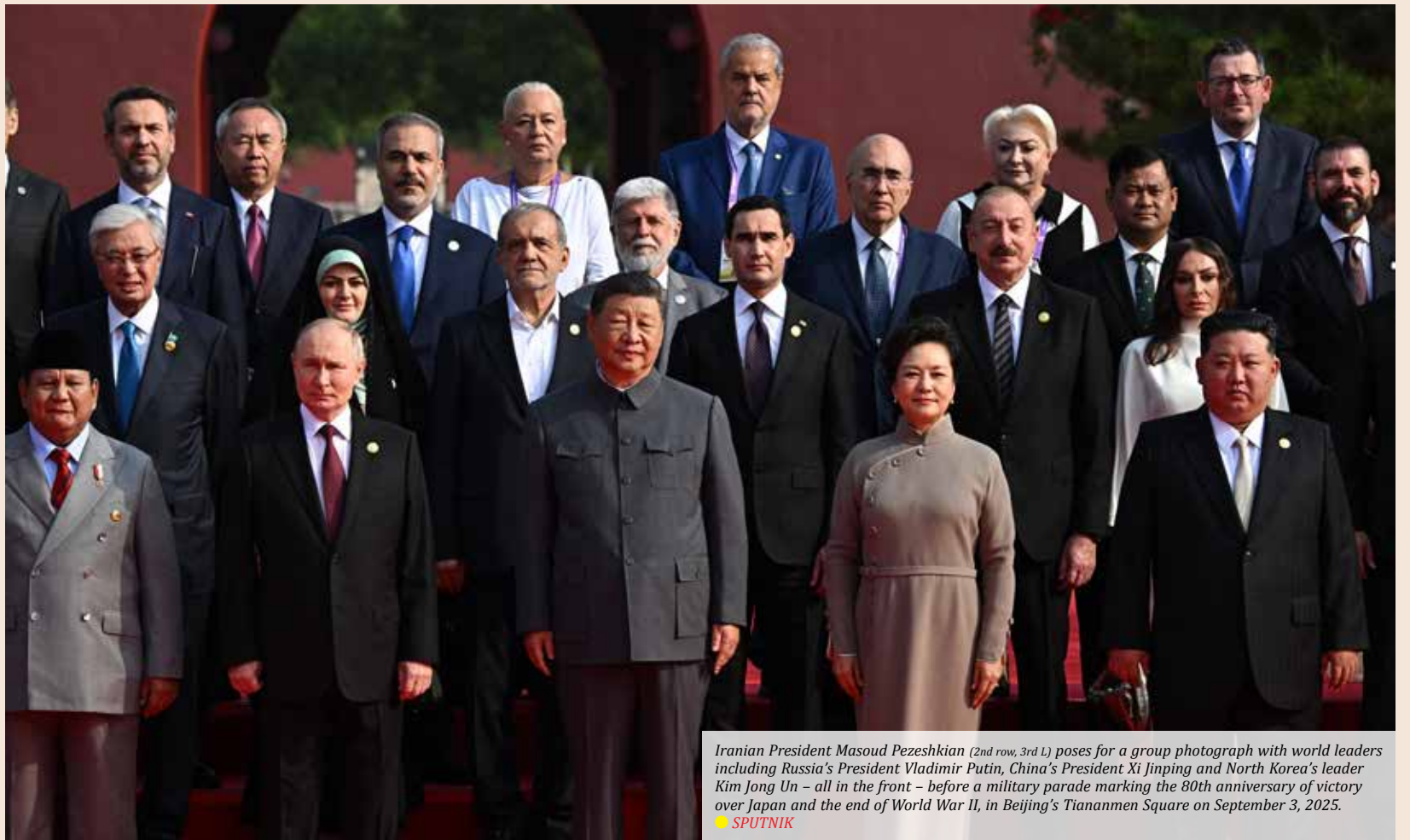
Lebanon is grappling with an extremely complex situation over proposals to disarm Hezbollah. Despite mounting regional and international pressure to enforce such a plan, its implementation is far from straightforward. Lebanon is a country built on a sectarian framework defined under the Taif Agreement that ended its 15-year civil war. The political system rests on a delicate balance among three major sects: Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shia Muslims, each holding a share of power. Any move that disregards the collective interests of these communities risks triggering fresh crises and destabilizing the country. The issue of disarming Hezbollah has gained urgency in recent months under external pressure from the United States, the Zionist regime of Israel, and Saudi Arabia, alongside internal calls from Christian parties opposed to Hezbollah. A plan recently tabled by Washington envisages the full disarmament of Hezbollah, followed by the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south and, ultimately, the demarcation of precise borders with Israel. However, this proposal clashes with UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and earlier agreements between Hezbollah and Israel. Hezbollah has therefore objected to the incomplete implementation of past deals and insists no new plan can proceed until existing commitments are fully honored. In the Lebanese government's latest session, which approved the disarmament of Hezbollah, Shia ministers walked out in protest. This move disrupted the sectarian balance of the cabinet, effectively rendering any decision taken without the participation of one community unlawful and unenforceable. Nevertheless, Washington continues to push Beirut to carry out this decision, despite the fact that Lebanon's sectarian consensus rejects it. Statesmen across the political and sectarian spectrum warn that such an approach would only complicate matters further. They argue that any resolution must be pursued through dialogue and peaceful negotiation — the only viable path to a settlement.

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Pezeshkian calls for pushback against 'bullying', unilateralism

Iran-China convergence serving as 'solid basis for expanding cooperation': **Official**

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd row, 3rd L) poses for a group photograph with world leaders including Russia's President Vladimir Putin, China's President Xi Jinping and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un – all in the front – before a military parade marking the 80th anniversary of victory over Japan and the end of World War II, in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on September 3, 2025.

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Pezeshkian calls for pushback against 'bullying', unilateralism

Iran-China convergence serving as 'solid basis for expanding cooperation': *Official*

International Desk

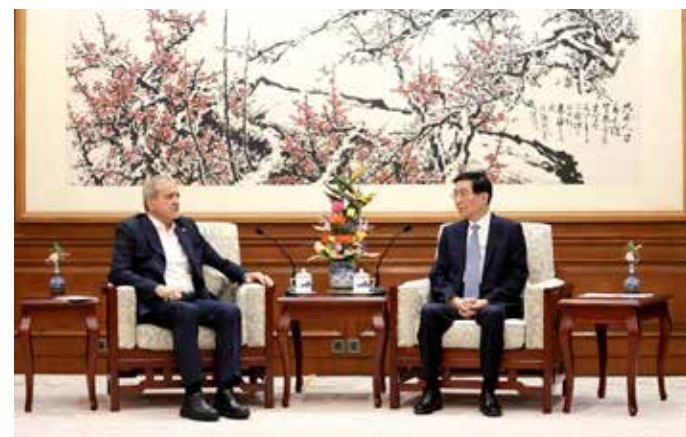
Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday urged closer cooperation with China to counter what he called the "bullying" of states seeking to undermine relations between Tehran and Beijing. Speaking during a meeting with Huang Hu, a senior member of the Communist Party of China, Pezeshkian said Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has instructed the government to expand relations with China, and my administration is "committed to moving quickly to implement agreements through a joint working group." The remarks came a day after

Pezeshkian's talks with President Xi Jinping, where both leaders agreed to accelerate previously signed deals. "The Islamic Republic is ready to put into practice all the agreements reached," Pezeshkian said, stressing that the outcomes of the Xi meeting must be followed through. Huang echoed those pledges, saying Beijing is "ready to operationalize" Xi's commitments. He underlined China's continued backing of Iran's sovereignty and national interests, adding that promises made by Xi would "certainly be fulfilled." Turning to multilateral cooperation, Pezeshkian described the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as a key platform to

counter unilateralism. "Humanity is thirsty for justice, fairness and rule of law," he said. "Global civilization rests on the ancient cultures of countries like Iran and China, enabling nations to live with dignity." Huang thanked Tehran for supporting Xi's recently unveiled "Global Governance Initiative," presented at the SCO summit this week. He said China and Iran shared common views on rejecting hegemony and upholding the post-World War II international order, calling the convergence "a solid basis for expanding cooperation." Pezeshkian had endorsed the initiative in his meeting with Xi, calling it an important step toward strengthening multilateralism and pushing back against unilateral approaches. The proposal seeks to reshape global governance around fairness, multipolarity, and people-centered development. The Iranian president wrapped up his four-day visit to China on September 3 by joining leaders from more than 25 countries at a military parade in Beijing marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, where China showcased its latest weaponry.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) meets with Huang Hu, a senior member of the Communist Party of China, in Beijing on September 3, 2025
● [president.ir](#)



During his stay, Pezeshkian addressed the 25th SCO summit and the parallel "SCO Plus" meeting and met with the presidents of China, Russia, Turkey,

and Tajikistan, Pakistan's prime minister, and the UN secretary-general. He later held a session with Iranian expatriates living in China.

US rules, conditions blocking Iran nuclear talks: *Gov't spox*

International Desk

Iran's government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said on Wednesday that US "special conditions and rules" are preventing the resumption of stalled nuclear talks, despite Tehran's stated readiness to return to the negotiations. Speaking after a weekly cabinet meeting, she stressed that talks "cannot take place by diktats," and must be conducted with free will. She also reiterated that Iran's missile capability was off the table, recalling the country's vulnerability during the eight-year war with Iraq (1980-88) when it lacked missiles to defend its people. By contrast, she cited Iran's ability to safeguard itself during the recent 12-day conflict with Israel, which ended on June 24. Iran was engaged in indirect nuclear talks with the US, when Israel attacked and started a 12-day conflict that also saw the US bomb Iran's nuclear facilities. Negotiations have since been frozen. Tehran insists it is ready to return to the table, but only with guarantees that it will not face renewed attacks. However, Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), said in a tweet on September 2 that it is the US which is unwilling to enter negotiations. He stressed that Iran seeks "rational negotiations," but accused Washington of raising "unrealizable issues",



Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani speaks to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting in Tehran on September 3, 2025.
● [IRNA](#)

such as the missile capability, that block dialogue. The dispute comes as France, Germany and Britain triggered the so-called "snapback" mechanism under the 2015 nuclear deal on August 28, a move that could see the return of UN sanctions within 30 days unless a new agreement is reached. The three European powers have urged Tehran to engage with Washington to prevent that outcome. Russia and China, however, have backed Iran, joining Tehran in a letter to the UN Security Council demanding that the mechanism be scrapped, arguing it violates both the 2015 nuclear deal and Resolution 2231 that endorsed it. Asked about those joint efforts, Mohajerani said, "We are making these moves because we are hopeful. Otherwise, such steps would not be taken." She added that

Iran was mobilizing all its diplomatic capacity, particularly with eastern partners, to find a way forward. UN spokesman Stéphane Dujarric, meanwhile, said although the UN is not a member of the nuclear deal, the director general has urged all parties to use the 30-day window to "strengthen the path of diplomacy." South Korea's Sang Jin Kim, the Security Council's rotating president, acknowledged "wide divergences" over interpretations of Resolution 2231, saying only that discussions remain ongoing. "We had an informal dialogue with members of the Security Council on this matter," he said. He added that, at present, he cannot predict what will happen. "Our goal is to consult transparently, honestly, and closely with the relevant parties," he said.

Tehran raps US escalation in Caribbean as 'serious threat' to global peace

International Desk

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Ali Bahreini, warned on Wednesday that recent US actions in Latin America and the Caribbean pose a "serious threat" to international peace and security, accusing Washington of violating the UN Charter. Speaking at a session of the UN Conference on Disarmament, Bahreini highlighted years of "illegal sanctions, unilateral coercive measures, and attempts at regime change and even assassination of lawful officials" in Venezuela. He said the recent deployment of a US naval fleet and nuclear submarine to the Caribbean "openly threatens the political independence and territorial integrity of Venezuela." The US claims the deployment targets narcotics trafficking and accuses Venezuela of collaborating with drug cartels, while Caracas views the buildup as a threat to its sovereignty. Bahreini described these actions as a "clear violation of fundamental principles of international law," including Article 2 of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force, obliges states to resolve disputes peacefully, and forbids interference in the internal affairs of other nations. "The very purpose of the United Nations is to uphold the rule of law in international relations, not to impose power and pressure," he said, regretting that the recent US attack on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities in cooperation with Israel, showed Washington's disregard for diplomacy. The US joined Israel in its aggression against Iran in June, bombarding the country's three main nuclear sites. The envoy stressed that threatening a



non-nuclear NPT member with a nuclear submarine by a permanent Security Council member "delivers a serious blow to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime." He further argued that the move violates the Treaty of Tlatelolco, a regional pact that establishes Latin America and the Caribbean as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, to which the United States is a signatory under Protocol II. Calling on the international community to act before the crisis escalates into "all-out confrontation," Bahreini urged Washington to withdraw its military forces from the Caribbean, respect Venezuela's sovereignty, and commit to resolving disputes through diplomacy and international law. He concluded by warning that "provocative behavior by a nuclear-armed state against a non-nuclear country once again demonstrates how real the risk of nuclear weapons use remains." The only credible guarantee against such a threat, he said, was "complete, verifiable, and irreversible nuclear disarmament." "Until such a goal is achieved, providing binding legal assurances of non-use and non-threat of use against non-nuclear states remains an undeniable necessity," he concluded.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

PBO confirms planned hike in next year's military funding

National Desk

Hamid Pourmohammadi, head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO), confirmed that the country's military spending will see an increase next year, amid ongoing security threats following this summer's conflict with Israel and the United States. Pourmohammadi told reporters on Wednesday that "naturally, the defense budget will rise" in the coming fiscal year. His remarks come after Iran endured a 12-day war that erupted on June 13 when Israel launched strikes against the country, later

joined by the US, targeting Iranian nuclear facilities. The conflict ended with a ceasefire, but Tehran says the threats to its national security remain. The Iranian government had already sharply increased its defense budget for the current Persian calendar year (started March 21). According to Iran's budget law, military allocations nearly tripled compared to the previous year. The direct funding earmarked for the Armed Forces, including the Ministry of Defense, the Army, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and police forces, is estimated between \$15.7 billion and \$21.8 billion.

Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani announced after the approval of the budget law that the defense funding would rise by 200%, stressing the move was aimed at "strengthening the country's deterrent power." Despite this rise, military spending in the Middle East remains dominated by Iran's regional rivals. Saudi Arabia allocated \$75.8 billion in 2023, ranking fifth globally after the US, China, Russia, and India. Israel followed with \$27.5 billion, a 24% jump largely tied to its war in Gaza. Turkey, with \$15.8 billion, ranked 22nd worldwide, still outspending Iran.



Minister: Oil sales up by 21,000 bpd in first four months of year

Economy Desk

Iran sold an average of 21,000 barrels per day (bpd) more oil in the first four months of the calendar year (began on March 20, 2025) compared with the same period a year earlier, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Wednesday.

"We don't want to say we have no problems selling oil, but for the people's information, in the first four months of this year we sold on average 21,000 bpd more than last year, or about 630,000 barrels more each month," he told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting, IRNA reported.

Under Iran's Seventh Development Plan, the government is targeting daily oil sales of 4 million bpd, with Paknejad stressing that the plan does not set production capacity at 4 million bpd but aims for 4.8 million bpd.

He said actual output is expected to reach about 4.58 million bpd, but financing the investments needed to achieve those targets remains a serious challenge. Paknejad said last week that he usually avoids giving specific figures, "but on average the country's crude oil production capacity has risen by 127,000 barrels per day over the past year."

Data by ship-tracking firms shows a surge



in Iranian oil shipments in recent months, and the country's oil exports to China hit record levels in June.

Vortexa estimated imports at over 1.8 million bpd between June 1–20, while Kpler put June exports at 1.46 million bpd as of June 27, up from about 1 million in May.

According to Vortexa, Iranian oil exports to China surged in June, reaching record highs – over 1.8 million bpd. Kpler, another data firm, estimated Iran's June oil and condensate exports to China at 1.46 million bpd as of June 27, up from around

face," he added.

Britain, France, and Germany last Thursday triggered the so-called snapback mechanism under a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, accusing Tehran of violating the 2015 accord. The move could allow for a return of six UN sanctions resolutions that were adopted between 2006 and 2010 in response to Iran's alleged non-compliance with UN nuclear regulations.

US slaps fresh anti-Iran sanctions

Also, as part of Washington's so-called maximum pressure campaign against Iran, the US Treasury Department on Tuesday sanctioned a network of shipping companies and vessels led by an Iraqi-Kittitian businessman for selling Iranian oil disguised as Iraqi oil.

The administration of US President Donald Trump is keeping pressure on Iran while nuclear talks have stalled. A sixth round of negotiations was suspended after Israel launched a 12-day war against the country in June.

"We remain committed to an oil supply free from Iran and will continue our efforts to disrupt the ongoing attempts by Tehran to evade US sanctions," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement said, Reuters reported.

Money supply up 8.8% in Q1 calendar year, CBI data shows



The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) reported an 8.8% quarterly increase in the country's money supply for the three months to late June. CBI figures cited in a Tuesday report by the semi-official Fars news agency showed that the Iranian economy's total money supply, technically known as M3 money supply, was 110,588 trillion rials (more than \$108.41 billion), at the end of the calendar month to June 21, Press TV reported.

The annual increase in money supply in Iran was 32.4% compared to the year to late June 2024, the figures showed.

The increase was 5.6% higher than the year-on-year rise in the M3 money supply reported by the CBI in late June last year, the lender said.

Its figures showed that Iran's monetary base, which is the cash in circulation in the country and deposits held by the CBI, had risen by 6.3% in June compared to late March to reach a total of 14,444.4 trillion rials (more than \$14.16 billion).

The CBI has been reporting increases in its net foreign assets as a result of a consistent rise in Iran's oil exports as well as the increase in the country's official exchange rates. The bank said in late March that the monetary base in the country had risen by 24.5% year on year.

Its Tuesday figures showed that government debt to the CBI had increased by 18.5% in June compared to late March, contributing to the rise in Iran's monetary base over the period.

Petchem output hits 32m tons in five months; new projects launched

Economy Desk

Iran produced 32 million tons of petrochemical products in the first five months of the Iranian year (began on March 20, 2025) despite "difficult conditions," Hassan Abbaszadeh, head of the National Petrochemical Company, said on Wednesday.

Of that total, 13 million tons worth \$5.5 billion were exported and 7 million tons worth \$4 billion were sold on the domestic market, he told a press conference, SHANA reported.

Referring to the importance of port infrastructure in the petrochemical industry, Abbaszadeh cited the launch of new jetties, strengthening of transmission lines and the expansion of loading and unloading capacity as measures taken to develop the sector's infrastructure.

According to the official addressing the press in May, the end of the previous year, which ended on March 20, 2025, the

industry's installed capacity had reached 75 million tons, with 78% of that operational.

"Last year, the industry produced 42 million tons of final petrochemical products, excluding inter-complex feedstock, worth \$24 billion. Of that, 29 million tons valued at \$13 billion were exported and 13 million tons worth about \$11 billion were sold domestically," he said on May 12.

Development projects

Abbaszadeh said 15 petrochemical projects, four feedstock supply projects, three utility service projects and four to five other schemes are scheduled to be commissioned this year. Six projects have already been launched and entered production.

The first phase of a flare gas recovery project in Khuzestan Province was inaugurated this year, returning 2.7 million cubic meters of gas per day to

the feedstock network. In total, projects coming onstream in 2025 will add 9.8 million tons of production capacity with \$6 billion of investment.

Feedstock challenge, solutions

He described feedstock supply as the industry's biggest challenge, saying nearly all current capacity is in use but many units remain idle due to shortages.

The main solution, he said, is investment by petrochemical companies in upstream projects and the use of flare gas. Several recovery projects backed by Persian Gulf holding, Marun and other firms have made progress, with some already operational. Large-scale flare gas recovery projects aim to eliminate flaring in targeted regions by next year. In cases where company investment has been insufficient, direct links have been established be-



tween petrochemical producers and these projects to speed up financing.

Market expansion

Abbaszadeh said Africa is being studied as a new target market. Separate assessments have been carried out for each country to identify feedstocks, suppliers and substitution capacity for Iranian products.

The policy mirrors Iran's successful expansion in the Indian market and aims to increase its share in non-state markets while diversifying its industrial customer base.

One key project is smart industry monitoring, carried out with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, to install smart devices and improve process control.

Iran's rosewater exports reach Persian Gulf, Europe, Asia: Guild head

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Iran exports rosewater to markets in the Persian Gulf, East and Southeast Asia and Europe, according to Reza Navabi, the head of Kashan Rosewater and Herbal Distillates Guild.

Destinations include Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf, and Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Turkey in Europe, Navabi said in an interview with Iran Daily.

China is one of the biggest target markets in East Asia for rosewater, rosebuds and rose essence, he told the newspaper.

Navabi said the industry is seeking to expand exports worldwide by improving

raw material supply and adopting new technologies. Kashan county is Iran's main hub, accounting for over 70% of national rosewater and herbal distillate production, he said.

"While rose cultivation and rosewater production also take place elsewhere, most of the crop grown across Iran is sent to Kashan for processing. The harvest there starts in end of May and lasts until early July, about one month in each area." Yields average 5 to 6 tons of roses per hectare, rising to 10 tons in irrigated fields. From three tons of freshly harvested roses, one kilogram of essence and 15 kilograms of rosewater can be produced, he said.

The guild chief said that Kashan has 2,400 traditional workshops, 47 industrial plants and 138 semi-industrial facilities producing rosewater, along with two rose essence factories.

The head of Kashan Rosewater and Herbal Distillates Guild assessed rose production in Kashan farms this year as very good, saying favorable rainfall at the start of the year boosted yields compared with last year.

Challenges

Despite high production costs, Navabi said banks have provided no support to rosewater and distillate producers, while the Agriculture Ministry also failed to support farmers as in previous years, leaving unsold roses in many fields.

The industry is aiming to expand exports and win new markets, with a weaker rial boosting foreign currency earnings. Navabi said stronger policies on marketing and exports could increase revenues, especially if modern technologies are adopted to improve yields, diversify products and develop new ones.



Because rosewater is used in products containing sugar such as ice cream, syrups and sweets, the rise in sugar prices this year has slowed production of these goods and, in turn, reduced demand for rosewater, he added.

Saudis view relations with Iran as 'strategic, essential': **Ambassador**

Tehran-Riyadh security talks ongoing

INTERVIEW

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been on different paths in their relationship over the last two years or so. Before October 7, 2023 — when the Zionist regime started attacking the Gaza Strip and subsequently escalated acts of aggression against Lebanon and Syria, culminating in the 12-day war between Israel, the US, and Iran — Tehran and Riyadh were working hard to patch up their ties with a focus on bilateral issues. Over the last year, broader issues such as the fate of Palestine, the dangerous plans of the Zionist regime for West Asia, fears of the tensions spilling over, and the region getting stuck in a quagmire of military and security crises have become new driving forces for cooperation between the two sides.

How far can the scope of cooperation between Tehran and Riyadh be stretched under current conditions? Does the rapprochement we witness today have enough staying power to continue? These questions were put forward to Alireza Enayati, ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Saudi Arabia, in an interview:

Alireza Enayati



● SPECIAL EURASIA

Two or three months ago, you confirmed that Tehran and Riyadh have set out on a new track of relationship; an experience that seeks to pull this relationship out of prior stagnation. Exactly which areas does this new phase and this fresh chapter cover?

ENAYATI: It has been about two years since the start of the new phase of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. This relationship took shape in March 2023, and by late September of that year, the ambassadors of both countries headed off to their new posts simultaneously. I arrived in Riyadh in the morning, and Mr. Al-Anzi, my esteemed counterpart, checked in in Tehran in the afternoon.

Since then, we have kicked off cooperation in multiple fields and have expanded and deepened the relationship; notably in continuous political and international dialogues across various arenas, especially on the issue of Pales-

tine, which took on special conditions after the October 7 event. These consultations between Iran and Saudi Arabia have persisted consistently in support of and defending the rights of the Palestinian people. Consequently, several meetings of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, called for by Iran, were held, receiving full backing from the Saudis, enabling a series of meetings at the level of leaders, foreign ministers, and executive committees.

These meetings stem from the new type of Iran-Saudi relationship, and the consultations have gone beyond just formal meetings. They included numerous phone calls and meetings between high-ranking officials of the two countries. The late president Raisi, the late foreign minister Amir-Abdollahian, the First Vice President Aref, and the current Foreign Minister Araghchi all visited Saudi Arabia; In every one of these five meetings,

joint sessions were held with Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia. These sessions covered a broad range of bilateral, regional, Islamic world, and international issues.

Therefore, over two years, frequent contacts have been carried out between the last two presidents of Iran and Mohammed bin Salman. All these areas have been unlocked under the revival of Iran-Saudi relations.

In defense and security sectors as well, good dialogues exist between us and the Saudis. Khalid bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's minister of defense, paid a visit to Iran and met with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution. In this visit, both bilateral and broader regional matters relating to Iran-Saudi relations were discussed.

Regular contacts have been kept up between the chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces and the Saudi minister of defense, showing significant progress in this area as

well. We are effectively witnessing many breakthroughs in political, security, and defense arenas.

A common perception exists since the Beijing agreement (which you mentioned) that Saudi Arabia really wants to move on from the bitter chapter of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. As an ambassador, what signs can you point out to people in confirmation or denial of it?

You hit a very important point. We must look beyond theoretical concepts and see if this has materialized in practice or not. Theoretically, Iran entered the negotiations with firm determination, whether in the five rounds in Iraq, parallel talks in Muscat, or detailed discussions in Beijing. Iran was serious, and based on this seriousness, the desired outcome was hammered out, leading to the March 2023 announcement of resuming relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

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In talks with the Saudi side, both during my ambassadorial meetings and numerous high-level encounters, we have picked up on their view that Saudi Arabia considers relations with Iran strategically important and deems them essential for peace, stability, and guaranteeing security in the region.

Iran, during both its previous and current governments, has emphasized developing the principle of good neighborliness, and this has been pursued within the framework of principled neighborly relations. This resolve is clearly reflected in statements by officials of both countries. Hence, the Islamic Republic of Iran's perspective is fully based on expanding and deepening relations with Saudi Arabia and other neighbors under the principle of good neighborliness and advancing these ties.

In talks with the Saudi side, both during my ambassadorial meetings and numerous high-level encounters, we have picked up on their view that Saudi Arabia considers relations with Iran strategically important and deems them essential for peace, stability, and guaranteeing security in the region.

Such statements have been continually passed on from Saudi officials at the highest levels to the Iranian side. While these words exist in theory and discourse, we have also witnessed tangible events. For example, after the 2016 cut-off, religious visits like Umrah, previously halted, resumed with the relationship renewal. Last year, over 200,000 Iranian pilgrims undertook Umrah in Saudi Arabia.

Another example is the resumption of scheduled commercial flights between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Now, three to four weekly flights operate from Dammam to the holy city of Mashhad, indicating expanding ties.

Economic statistics from bilateral relations are not very satisfying. In your opinion, what is the main challenge? There is a general cooperation agreement between us and Saudi Arabia, approved in 1999 and signed by officials of the time. Could you explain what follow-ups have been carried out so far? Is the same agreement with the same terms still the yardstick for our commercial



The late chief of Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Bagheri (L) welcomes Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman in Tehran, Iran, on April 17, 2025.

● IRANIAN ARMED FORCES OFFICE



Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman Al Saud (L) meets with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran, Iran, on April 17, 2025, to deliver a message from the King of Saudi Arabia.
● leader.ir

and economic work? And fundamentally, what programs does the Islamic Republic of Iran have to boost economic and commercial relations with Riyadh?

I mentioned some areas in terms of developing relations, but in the economic and commercial sectors, cooperation indicators have not taken off noticeably. Despite all the talks and efforts that have been made, we cannot yet talk about a significant trade volume between Iran and Saudi Arabia. This does not mean efforts have ground to a halt; Rather, boosting the economic ties is time-consuming, and its fruits take time to show up. Nonetheless, over the past two years, several economic and commercial measures have been rolled out. Many visits by Iranian officials to Saudi Arabia have taken place within international summits, and meetings with Saudi ministers of economy, finance, investment, and commerce have taken place, all emphasizing developing economic relations. This shows that the Saudi side also has this matter on its agenda, but execution requires time, and we hope it pays off soon.

Are sanctions one of the main obstacles, or are there other obstacles at play as well?

Let me pick up from the previous question by saying that the agreement to avoid double taxation between Iran and Saudi Arabia has been initialed, and we hope it will be signed soon. Also, drafts of documents concerning mutual investment protection, customs cooperation, and road transport have been put forward by Iran to Saudi Arabia. This shows that serious steps have been taken on the economic front, but tangible results have yet to come through as we expect.

Could you shed some light on the issue of sanctions?

Yes, sanctions are indeed one of the challenges, but in our talks with our Saudi brothers, we have stressed that not all economic activities of Iran with other countries fall under sanctions. Some parts may be subject to sanctions, but the entire economic apparatus is not held back. Iran has commercial cooperation exceeding €20 billion with many countries in the region and beyond.

Is this figure applicable to current conditions?

Yes, this volume of cooperation with neighboring countries exists under current circumstances, indicating there are areas where sanctions can be sidestepped and cooperation expanded. Efforts in this regard are underway. In Dr. Araghchi's recent trip to Saudi Arabia and meeting with the crown prince, regional as well as economic and commercial issues were brought up, with emphasis on gearing up these areas. We hope these discussions will soon yield tangible outcomes so that the economic and commercial sectors can keep pace with political, security, defense, cultural, and scientific fields. Saudi Arabia has now opened scholarships for Iranian students, and at least three Iranian students have been officially taken in at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, where they are currently studying. This matter was also raised and emphasized during the visit of the Iranian minister of education to Saudi Arabia. Therefore, multiple branches of Iran-Saudi relations exist that we hope will bear fruit, benefiting Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the region.

Back in 2015, during the JCPOA era, certain behaviors from Saudi officials were perceived as opposition to the deal. Now that efforts to revive the JCPOA or a similar agreement are in progress, Saudi Arabia seems to have come around to accepting it. As the ambassador, do media speculations that Saudi Arabia is willing to host indirect talks between Iran and the US hold water? Have you been offered any proposal? And what is Saudi Arabia's stance on de-escalation between Iran and the US at this juncture?

Saudi Arabia, according to its officials, advances its policies with a priority on preserving peace, stability, and calm in the region and strives to cool down regional tensions and keep things peaceful. My impression is that Saudi priorities right now are maintaining calm, peace, and regional stability. On this basis, we have seen Saudi backing of Iran's recent nuclear talks.

Has any proposal for hosting indirect talks been put on the table by Saudi Arabia? Because several countries have been floated as options.

If I say I'm not aware, please chalk it up to a lack of information on my part.

Discussions in the last few months during indirect Iran-US talks have focused on forming a regional nuclear consortium. While this idea was still very raw — and of course, the Israeli and US aggression that took place has pushed this issue to the sidelines — do you think there is a basis for cooperation on peaceful nuclear energy between Iran and Saudi Arabia?

Well, I believe this is a fully technical matter and my answer cannot cover all its dimensions, but in brief, it is as you described — a kind of cooperation within a consortium framework. Under what conditions it will be is for experts in the field to say. Yet, another very positive point comes into play, which makes collaboration possible: the idea of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. This idea was put forward by Iran before the Islamic Revolution, then Egypt joined in, and it has since appeared as a guideline

in regional cooperation. Recently, Iran has reiterated this idea. It could foster regional cooperation in the area of opposition to weapons of mass destruction in West Asia in general, not just the Persian Gulf — meaning the circle is broader. It could also discipline unfounded fears about Iran's nuclear program by emphasizing this proposal or initiative in the region and through regional collaborations. I think there is room for cooperation here as well.

Is the idea you mentioned currently being actively discussed between Iran and Saudi Arabia? Are there ongoing consultations?

Specifically, no; thoroughly, no. But as a concept, it is indeed on the table. However, Iran and Saudi Arabia have not yet sat down to hammer out details on this topic.

Following the Israeli and US aggression, different reactions emerged from the region and beyond. Some reactions were disappointing, others hopeful signs of better days ahead. You were in Riyadh at the time — how would you describe Saudi Arabia's response to the aggression? And as a closing note, could you share a memory from those 12 days and

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In the regional media arena, Iran's action during the imposed 12-day war was regarded as legitimate defense, and Saudi media and officials took positive stands defending the Iranian people and condemning the aggression. This was an important milestone in bilateral relations.

Saudi Arabia's approach at that time?

The first contact was made by the Saudi foreign minister with his counterpart, Dr. Araghchi, extending condolences and sympathy and expressing support for Iran. On the morning of the aggression, Jassim Al Budaiwi called me and said they sympathize and condemn the attack, and they were waiting to touch base with Dr. Araghchi to personally offer condolences and issue a statement.

Saudi Arabia immediately put out a very strong statement that explicitly used the word “aggression,” not just “targeting”. Staunch words like “strong condemnation” and “denunciation” were used.

Later, the crown prince held a phone call with Dr. Pezeshkian, followed by a detailed statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When the Americans attacked Iran, the Saudis again issued a statement condemning it. Officially and through their declarations, Saudi Arabia went all in condemning the aggression. Afterwards, the Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, headquartered in Saudi Arabia, also rolled out statements condemning this aggression.

Saudi domestic media regarded Israel's attack on Iran as a continuation of the 1948, 1956, and 1973 aggressions, stressing Israel's aggressive nature.

In private Saudi TV networks, which tried to remain balanced and respect both sides' views, this stance was also evident. I conducted interviews with several private Arab networks, and the defense of Iran and condemnation of the Zionist regime were fully covered.

I think on the ground, with the strength and initiative of our armed forces, commander-in-chief, army, and IRGC, we were able to put the enemy in its place. In the regional media arena, Iran's action was regarded as legitimate defense, and Saudi media and officials took positive stands defending the Iranian people and condemning the aggression. This was an important milestone in bilateral relations.

Apart from the official position, was there any effort by Saudi Arabia to call off the aggression, given its ties to the United States?

I believe such efforts were probably made behind the scenes.

The full interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



US President Donald Trump (L) greets then-Saudi ambassador to the United States Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz at the White House on June 6, 2018. The two reportedly held a secret meeting on July 3, 2025, to discuss Iran and broader Middle East security following the Israeli-imposed 12-day war against Iran.
● CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

Mo'menimoqaddam grateful after Iran beats odds to retain world title

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Gholamreza Mo'menimoqaddam said he was grateful to see his team retain the crown at the FIVB Volleyball U21 World Championship in Jiangmen, China, despite significant adversity they faced prior to the event.

In rematch of the 2023 final, Iran came from behind to defeat Italy 3-1 (15-25, 25-18, 25-22, 25-14) on Sunday and secure the third world under-21 trophy for the country in four editions.

"No one in the country really expected this team to succeed at the World Championship, but thank God this group of players fought relentlessly to win the title for the third time," Iranian head coach told Mehr News Agency.

"Defending a title is much harder than winning it in the first place, and I'm truly grateful we accomplished it. We had an entirely new generation of players, yet we were still able to repeat our success as we felt a duty to deliver our best performance in the competition."

Iranian team's preparations for the competition were severely disrupted by the country's 12-day conflict with Israel in June, but Mo'menimoqaddam was delighted to see the team's hard work pay off despite the difficult circumstances.

"Our players had to train without proper sleep or rest through the missile attacks in Tehran. However, all these hardships were compensated by the players' joy and satisfaction at the



Iran head coach Gholamreza Mo'menimoqaddam is thrown up by his players after the final victory over Italy at the FIVB Volleyball U21 World Championship in Jiangmen, China, on August 31, 2025.
● AMIRHOSSEIN KHAIRKHAH/VOLLEYBALL.IR

end of the championship.

"The team entered the tournament without any proper friendly matches and faced formidable opponents in Italy, Poland, the United States, and Argentina. We had to leave for China 10 days before the tournament got underway. We still managed to beat France and Brazil in a couple of warmup games in Ji-

angmen, which truly boosted the players' confidence for the competition."

Sunday's triumph extended Iran's winning streak in this age group to a remarkable 29 games over four years under Mo'menimoqaddam – during which the country also claimed successive Asian under-20 titles either side of the world U21 trophy in Ma-

nama.

"It was a true blessing for me and my coaching that this team rounded off a 1,110-day unbeaten run with this trophy. Honestly speaking, I never once thought about the record; our main focus was always on our performance and getting results. This victory is not limited to my efforts alone; all my colleagues

worked hard over these four years to make this honor a reality for our country's volleyball."

"We remained undefeated throughout all official tournaments and even the friendly matches, both in Iran and abroad. The current squad has undergone some changes over this period, but through hard work and precise planning, it has

continued the path of success. This demonstrates the immense power and talent within Iranian volleyball."

"We succeeded in integrating a new generation of players into the national team framework. Approximately 50 percent of the team was changed. Players like Pouya Ariakhah, Shayan Meharabi, Ariyan Mahmoudinejad, Ali Mombeini, and Emad Kakaavand, who previously had no previous international experience, with the youth team, made the roster and delivered an extraordinary performance. This just demonstrates how the talent development process in Iranian volleyball has been highly effective."

Beyond the under-21 glory, Mo'menimoqaddam believes his players have much more to offer in the national team, once they make their senior international breakthrough in the coming years. "Our main task now is to ensure these young players continue their path to the senior national team. It is up to the federation and the Sports Ministry to preserve this golden generation."

"These players are mature enough to play at the senior level. Any player who has competed in a World Championship and faced top-tier teams has gained sufficient experience, though it is crucial for them to make good choices for their future. The federation must also support these players so they can play for decent clubs, get called up to national training camps, and remain integrated into the national team selection process."

Iranian weightlifter Mo'eini eyeing new heights at World Championships

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifter Alireza Mo'eini said he will be looking to improve on last year's silver-winning campaign when competing at the upcoming IWF World Championships – starting October 2 in Forde, Norway. Mo'eini will be part of the Iranian 10-man squad at the world event, representing the country in the 96kg contests – alongside Ali A'alipour.

The Iranian duo will step onto the platform on the back of an impressive run at the major events over the past nine months.

While Mo'eini settled for a world snatch silver, A'alipour collected the clean & jerk and total bronzes in

Manama last December, before the two went on to bag five medals between them – including triple golds – at the Asian Championships in May.

Mo'eini said he has set his sights on the ultimate prize in the snatch competition this time around, though high-profile Bulgarian Karlos Nasar remains the favorite for glory in Forde. An Olympic 89kg champion in Paris last summer, Nasar completed a clean sweep of three world golds in the same weight class in Manama, but will compete in the 96kg division – where he holds the world snatch record with 188kg – in October's showpiece.

Asked if Iranian fans can expect him to break the

Bulgarian's record, Mo'eini said: "Definitely. It will be a close contest between me and Nasar in the snatch. I'll also give my best effort in the clean & jerk to win a total medal, but my top priority is to beat Nasar for the snatch gold."

"Nasar is a great athlete, but if we already count the gold medal as his – and everyone seems to think this way – it will be a setback for us ahead of the tournament. The numbers that Ali and I are hitting in training are at a level that could put us in contention for the gold medal."

Mo'eini, however, acknowledged that he would need to deliver a much-improved performance in clean & jerk, compared to

last year's campaign, where he finished 10th with a best lift of 202kg.

"I've posted some good lifts in training sessions and improved on my numbers from last year. However, due to a shoulder injury, the split jerk is a bit difficult for me right now. I'm working on it in training so I can successfully complete the lifts I'm pulling from the floor."

"With Olympic champions such as Nasar, [Qatar's] Fares El-Bakh, and [Iranian] Kianoush Rostami [who will represent Kosovo], among other title winners all in the mix, the competition will be fierce. Ali and I are relatively young weightlifters, but our intention is to stand on the global podium."



● AWF



● MNA

Iranian swimmer Izadyar aiming for fitting farewell in Aichi-Nagoya 2026

Sports Desk

Iranian para swimming sensation Shahin Izadyar said he will be aiming to add more glory to his decorated medal haul at next year's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Para Games before calling time on his glorious career.

Izadyar stole all the headlines at the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta, by collecting six golds and a silver medal, be-

fore he bagged two more silvers and triple bronze medals at the multi-sport event five years later in Hangzhou, China.

"I have managed to win a total of 24 medals across four appearances at the Asian Para Games, and I will strive to increase my medal count in my fifth and final participation at the event before retiring," Izadyar, 31, told ISNA.

The Iranian said he would still

need to improve in certain disciplines before next year's Games.

"I am intensively training for three events – the 100m breaststroke, as well as the 50m and 100m freestyle categories – with the goal of achieving success in Nagoya. I just want to retire from professional swimming on a high note by winning more medals there," added the Iranian.

"I suffered a severe groin injury at the Paris Paralympics last year, which prevented me from achieving the result I had hoped for. This injury has weakened the muscles in my leg and has not yet fully healed. Nevertheless, I am continuing to swim under these circumstances, and my focus is on achieving the best possible result in my farewell at next year's Games."

Local games to enhance social bonds, tourism



ISNA



IRNA

Iranica Desk

Throughout various corners of Iran, there exist games deeply rooted in ancient traditions, intricately woven into the culture and daily lives of the people. These games are far more than mere pastimes; they represent an essential part of collective identity and cultural heritage. Traditional and local games have historically not only shaped the leisure activities of previous generations but also played a crucial role in the development of physical, intellectual, and social skills. Characterized by simple rules and minimal equipment, these games create opportunities for social interaction, teamwork, physical coordination, and even the cultivation of strategic thinking among players, ISNA wrote. In earlier times, such activities were embraced by all age groups and served as important venues for fostering social bonds. However, in today's rapidly changing world — marked by technological advance-

ments, shifts in lifestyle, and a growing preference for digital entertainment — many of these traditional games face the threat of fading into obscurity. This decline is not only a cultural loss but also diminishes untapped opportunities for tourism and economic growth. Viewing local games through a tourism lens presents two key objectives: firstly, the protection and revitalization of cultural heritage; and secondly, attracting both domestic and international tourists by offering them a unique, immersive experience of indigenous life. Globally, the integration of traditional sports and local games into tourism initiatives has emerged as a successful approach to sustainable development. Such activities do not merely allow tourists to observe local culture from a distance — they invite them to live it, touch it, and engage with it on a personal level. These authentic experiences foster meaningful cultural exchanges, create lasting memories, and simulta-



IRNA

neously generate sustainable revenue streams for local communities. In this context, Fa'ezeh Asadian Ardakani, a faculty member in the Faculty of Economics, Management, and Accounting at Yazd University, conducted a comprehensive study to examine the role of local games in advancing tourism and preserving indigenous culture. This research centers on

Yazd Province, where local games, though lesser-known, remain a cherished and integral component of the region's cultural identity. The study delves into the educational, psychological, social, and historical dimensions of these games, tracing their evolution over time. Moreover, it includes a comparative analysis between Yazd's indigenous games and

similar traditional games found in other cultures, aiming to further elucidate their significance within the realms of cultural identity and intangible heritage. Findings from this research reveal that local games, beyond their cultural appeal, serve as valuable vehicles for transmitting indigenous knowledge to future generations. Revitaliz-

ing these games within the framework of tourism-related events can create new employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth. Additionally, such activities provide a meaningful platform to enhance cultural interactions between tourists and local communities, thereby reinforcing social cohesion. One of the study's key insights highlights the critical importance of thoughtful planning and policymaking to organize festivals and cultural events centered on local games. These events have the potential to capture tourists' interest and simultaneously convey deep cultural values alongside entertainment. Given the potent potential of Yazd's local games, several practical initiatives can be pursued: organizing seasonal festivals, designing specialized tourism packages that combine participation in games with visits to historical and cultural sites, establishing museums dedicated to local games alongside educational

centers for learning and practicing them, and even leveraging digital media and platforms to introduce these traditions to a global audience. The broader significance of these findings lies in demonstrating that local games are far more than relics of the past or simple amusements. They represent powerful cultural and economic tools that can contribute directly to sustainable development efforts. By bridging the past and present, these games attract tourism and help shape a vibrant and dynamic future for local communities. It is also noteworthy that the scholarly article based on this research has been published in the journal Folk Culture and Literature, affiliated with Tarbiat Modares University. Beyond its academic value, this publication can serve as an important catalyst for drawing greater attention from policymakers, cultural authorities, and tourism stakeholders toward the often-overlooked potential of local games.

Qom's Mulla Sadra House catapulting visitors to history

Mulla Sadra House, in Qom Province, is a historical building where Sadr-ol Din Muhammad Shirazi, titled Sadr-ol-Mote'allehin and known as Mulla Sadra, lived for fifteen years. He was born in 1572 during the Safavid dynasty. This Iranian philosopher decided to move to Kahak near Qom to stay away from the Safavid court in Isfahan. Sadr-ol-Mote'allehin built the Khan School in Shiraz, after which, following the request of Allhverdi Khan Undiladze, the general and commander-in-chief of the Safavid army and ruler of Fars province, he returned to this city. The plan of Mulla Sadra House is in the form of a Chalipa or cross. The four Takhtgahs surrounding the structure have rooms built in two stories. Takhtgahs are notable promi-



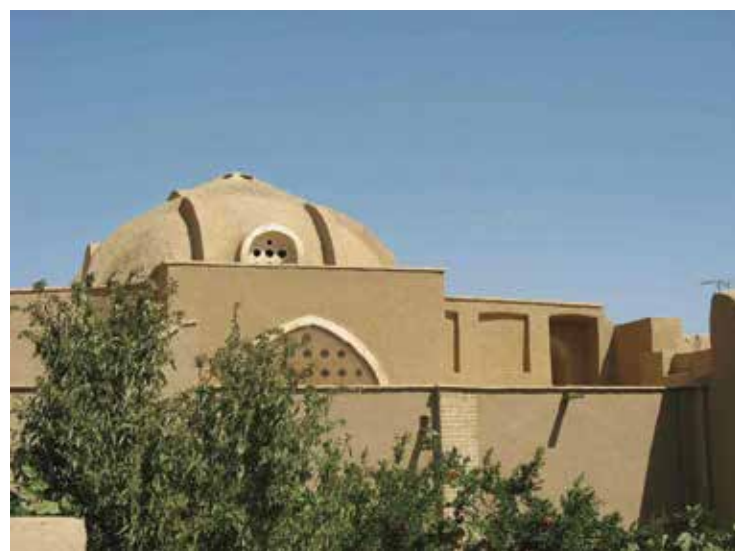
nent spaces or rooms (likely elevated or important seating areas), arranged around the cross-shaped plan of the house. There are eight rooms, of which only two remain today. Above the dome of

this house, colorful glasses have been implanted to allow sunlight to pass into the rooms, creating a spectacular view. The materials used in Mulla Sadra House are raw cob brick, mortar of clay, and

wooden pillars. The bricks measure twenty by twenty centimeters. The walls have been covered with a layer of black clay, and decorations in the form of plaster stucco can be seen. On the eastern side of the

house, a rich qanat exists that supplied water for watering the trees in the garden. Today, Mulla Sadra House is located in the farthest eastern part of Kahak, in Chall Hamam alley. It is

registered as a national heritage site of Iran and was restored in 2008. The house is positioned in the rural region south of Qom. Kahak is a land of mountains, gardens, and water springs, which



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results in its moderate weather and fertile fields. Today, Kahak has turned into a city located thirty kilometers from Qom and one of the biggest city of this province. Kahak has a rich history dating back several centuries as a strategic rural settlement due to its fertile lands and proximity to important trade routes. Over time, it developed from a small village into a thriving town, historically known for its agricultural productivity and natural resources. Its position near mountains and water springs made it an attractive place for settlement and cultivation, playing a vital role in the region's cultural and economic history. The transformation of Kahak into a city reflects its continued growth and importance within Qom Province.



38th Moscow Int'l Book Fair opens with Iran literary heritage on display

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran opened its pavilion at the 38th Moscow International Book Fair (MIBF) on Wednesday, presenting more than 320 titles spanning classical and contemporary literature, Iranology, Persian language instruction, Islamic studies, and non-fiction. The fair runs through September 7 at Pavilion 57 of the VDNH Exhibition Center, IRNA reported. The Iranian stand, organized by the Iran Book and Literature House with support from Iran's cultural center in Russia, occupies 27 square meters and serves as a hub for cultural di-

plomacy. It highlights Iran's literary heritage while promoting Persian language and fostering international collaboration in translation, copyright, and publishing. The display also commemorates the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), reinforcing Iran's cultural presence on the global stage. Interactive events are central to Iran's presentation. Author Marjan Fouladvand and illustrator Atefe Maleki Joo are hosting workshops on children's book illustration, storytelling, and Iranian mythology. The space also introduces the International Book of the Year

Award, and the Tehran International Book Fair, offering visitors a window into contemporary Iranian publishing and literary achievements. The MIBF hosts over 300 publishers and distributors from Russia, Iran, Belarus, China, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and North Korea. India is the guest of honor, showcasing more than 2,500 titles and organizing 50 events on modern technologies, literature, and cultural traditions. For the third year, the Moscow International Children's Book Fair runs concurrently, emphasizing youth literature, digital publishing, and interactive educational programs.



Shajarian's concert moved from Azadi Square to Azadi Stadium

Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani said on Wednesday that a free concert by acclaimed Iranian vocalist Homayoun Shajarian will be staged at Azadi Stadium on September 5 instead of Azadi Square, following a cabinet decision. The change of venue came after Shajarian announced on September 3 that his planned open-air performance in central Tehran had been canceled, Mehr News Agency reported. Zakani told reporters the gov-

ernment had reviewed the matter and voted to host the event in the 78,000-seat stadium, which he described as a safer and more "reliable" location. He stressed the municipality had "no role" in scrapping the earlier plan for Azadi Square. Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani also weighed in, saying the administration's stance had been clear since granting Shajarian a permit. "Holding a concert with the presence of millions, strengthening national unity, that has been

our position," she wrote on X. She added that Iran had once witnessed "ten-kilometer celebrations" after the war, showing that such gatherings are possible when institutions work hand in hand. Shajarian, one of Iran's most popular classical and fusion singers, received his permit in July for what would have been his first major outdoor performance in years. His concerts often draw huge crowds, and officials have promoted the September 5 show as a cultural highlight in the capital.

8th international travel, ecotourism fair gets underway in Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran opened the 8th international travel and ecotourism fair aka Oca Fair at the Shahr-e Aftab International Exhibition Center in southern Tehran on September 3. The event was inaugurated by Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri. The exhibition is scheduled to run from September 3 to 7, IRNA reported. Spanning over 13,000 square meters, the fair is divided into four main halls, each dedicated to a specific as-

pect of adventure and nature tourism. Exhibitors are showcasing a range of products and services, including camping gear, off-road vehicles, and ecotourism equipment. The event aims to promote responsible travel and environmental awareness, aligning with the ministry's goal to encourage domestic tourism and reduce foreign currency outflow. The exhibition also features a booth by the Iranian Touring and Automobile Club, offering services such as international driving permits, vehicle assistance, and car rentals in Dubai.



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri cuts the ribbon to open the 8th international travel and ecotourism fair aka Oca Fair in Tehran on September 3, 2025. ● IRNA

Iran, UNICEF launch joint projects to support vulnerable children, women

Social Desk

State Welfare Organization of Iran (SWO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) unveiled two collaborative projects aimed at assisting vulnerable children and empowering female-headed households. These initiatives were announced during a meeting between Javad Hosseini, head of Iran's State Welfare Organization of Iran, and Dorina Andreev-Jitaru, UNICEF Representative in Iran, on Wednesday. The first project focuses on providing support to orphaned, abandoned, and disabled children, particularly those affected by natural disasters and migration. The second aims to empower women who are the primary breadwinners of their families. Hosseini highlighted that SWO currently offers over 170 services, reaching approximately 8 million individuals nationwide. These services include vision and hearing screenings, genetic counseling,



Head of Iran's State Welfare Organization Javad Hosseini (c) and UNICEF Representative in Iran Dorina Andreev-Jitaru (r) attend a meeting in Tehran on September 3, 2025, to discuss joint initiatives supporting vulnerable children and empowering women. ● IRNA

and support for individuals with disabilities. The organization operates with a workforce of 19,000 full-time employees and 23,000 licensed non-governmental centers. The collaboration with UNICEF has also extended to humanitarian efforts, such as providing relief packages to earthquake survivors in Khoy and distributing 1,600

tablets to underserved areas. The partners plan to organize sports events for children under SCO's care, conduct empowerment workshops for women in cities like Kerman, Zahedan, and Ahvaz, and implement a mentorship program for young adults transitioning out of care. Hosseini emphasized the importance of continued support for these individuals beyond the age of 18, stating, "We believe that support should continue beyond the age of 18. UNICEF can assist in this regard." He also noted that Iran's experience in community-based rehabilitation and disaster response could serve as a model for other countries. Andreev-Jitaru praised SWO's comprehensive approach, stating, "I doubt any organization exists that reaches its target population as extensively as this one." She expressed UNICEF's commitment to supporting Iran's efforts to protect and empower vulnerable children and families.

Disarming Hezbollah would ...

The American envoy to Beirut, Tom Barrack, has proposed that disarmament be executed by the Lebanese army, with a clear timeline for implementation. Yet, all indications suggest the army is reluctant to resort to force. Military leaders are wary of being dragged into an armed confrontation with Hezbollah, knowing that compulsory disarmament would be futile without the group's consent. Given the army's own sectarian composition — which includes Shia, Sunni, and supporters of the resistance axis — pressing it into forced disarmament risks sparking internal tensions and undermining the army itself. Senior officers appear well aware that the issue is being dictated from abroad and that armed action would push Lebanon to the brink of chaos. For this reason, many Lebanese are seeking a negotiated settlement rather than coercion, which would never

result in the complete disarmament of Hezbollah. Lebanese political elders argue that the starting point must be a national defense strategy, enabling the country to secure its borders and territorial integrity. Such a plan would require coordination between the army and the resistance to guard the southern frontier. Weakening Hezbollah's military presence there would, they warn, open the door for Israel to advance as far as Beirut. Equally crucial are binding guarantees from all parties that, if Hezbollah were to lay down arms, Israel would refrain from attacking Lebanon. History has shown, however, that the US has failed to provide such assurances or rein in Israel. In sum, disarming Hezbollah would place the security of Lebanon — and indeed the wider region — in jeopardy. Forced disarmament through military action is bound to fail. Unless Hezbollah itself agrees, no faction inside

Lebanon has the capacity to compel it to give up its weapons. Talks between Hezbollah, the government, and the army command are ongoing in search of compromise. Yet Lebanese leaders are acutely aware of the dangers: a reckless move could set the country on an irreversible path toward civil war. For external actors such as the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, only their own interests matter. Lebanon's internal security, and the potential toll of a new civil conflict on its people, is of little concern to them. Resistance forces in Lebanon remain firmly opposed to any coercive disarmament. The current negotiations appear aimed at identifying peaceful solutions that preserve the balance of power and safeguard Lebanon's national security. Above all, avoiding civil war is the overriding concern for Lebanon's political, military, and intellectual elite as they try to weather this intricate situation.