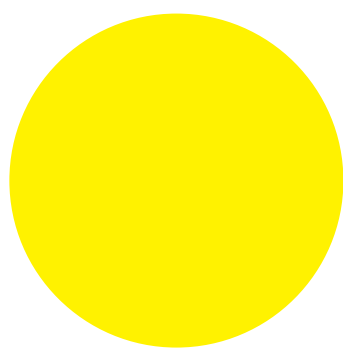


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Trump-Netanyahu's plan aimed at 'dignified' exit from Gaza war

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



US President Donald Trump has recently floated a proposal to end the war in Gaza, a blueprint that has stirred a wide range of reactions — from conditional approval to outright criticism. The plan, set out in around 20 points, calls for an immediate ceasefire, the exchange of hostages and release of prisoners, the gradual withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, and the handover of temporary governance to an international transitional authority under a "Peace Council" led by Trump with figures such as Tony Blair on board. It also envisages the disarmament of Hamas, large-scale international aid for reconstruction, economic investment, and conditions for the return of displaced residents.

Crucially, the proposal postpones recognition of key Palestinian demands, including the creation of an independent state, to later stages and ties it to reforms by the Palestinian Authority. Trump, however, has warned that if Hamas refuses to sign on, Israel — with full US backing — will be free to press ahead with military action. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he accepts the plan but with certain caveats. Several Arab and Muslim countries, including Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, and the UAE, issued a joint statement framing the proposal as an opening for peace. The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank welcomed efforts to end the war and declared readiness to take part within the framework of reforms. Hamas, for its part, stressed it had no role in drafting the plan and flatly rejected the clauses on disarmament. Other Palestinian factions such as the Islamic Jihad branded the blue-

print a "recipe to blow up the region." Meanwhile, some observers warn it could ultimately boil down to legitimizing Israeli occupation. Against the stated backdrop, Iran Daily spoke with Middle East expert Jafar Qannadbashi.

IRAN DAILY: Does Trump's plan serve Palestinian interests or is it designed mainly to favor Israel?

QANNADBASHI: First, the goals of Trump and Netanyahu must be spelled out before we can assess whether the plan solves anything. Trump's objectives are twofold: to block spontaneous initiatives by states or popular movements pushing for a Palestinian state, and to stage a "dignified end" to the Gaza war. After Palestine's admission as a full UN member and the groundswell of global public support for Palestinian statehood, both Trump and Netanyahu fear that regional governments, Hamas, or even grassroots movements might sud-

denly declare a state for Gaza. To head off such a scenario, they came up with this plan. The [Tony] Blair component, too, looks like an emergency measure aimed at derailing such grassroots momentum. In other words, Trump wants to prevent the emergence of any formal or quasi-state arrangement for Palestine. For that reason alone, the plan is bound to fail. The second point is that the two-year Gaza war has inflicted enormous damage on America's reputation. Israel is under heavy pressure, yet remains stuck where it started. Despite the massacres and the heavy cost of war, it has not managed to free its hostages. A handful were killed, a few were released, but the core issue is unresolved. The Israeli regime can no longer sustain this conflict, as casualties mount daily. The US is equally unable to stand up to mounting international protests; its image has been badly tarnished and is in urgent need of repair. This plan is meant to pave the way for an honour-

able exit from the war. Naturally, any plan put forward by Netanyahu or Trump will not serve Palestinians. They have killed as many as they could, and any proposal they table is a continuation of the same pressure and bloodshed. This is not a genuine rescue plan for Palestine.

Given the positive noises from some Arab states and Palestinian groups, can it be said a regional consensus is emerging in support of the plan — or is it facing strong resistance?

Absolutely not. Some dependent governments may put on a show of support, but the plan on its own won't fly. A few may think accepting a political authority for Palestine prevents its outright elimination, framing it as the "lesser evil." Recall that Trump once advocated the mass expulsion of Gazans, and Netanyahu said the same. So, some might see this plan as preferable to wholesale removal.

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Complex int'l conditions necessitate consolidation of Iran-China ties: *Pezeshkian*

International Desk

Iran President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday that the complex and changing international conditions make it necessary for Tehran and Beijing to further strengthen their bilateral relations.

In a message to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on China's National Day, the Iranian president described the Asian country as a key supporter of increase in the level of prosperity

in the world.

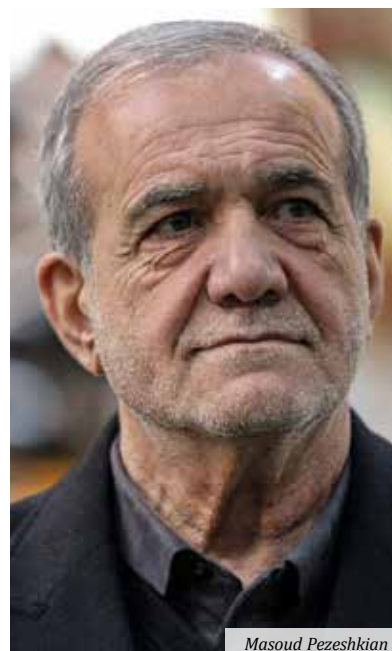
Pezeshkian emphasized that China's National Day is a symbol of unity, progress, and significant achievements, which has brought prosperity for the countries across world.

The Iranian president called a comprehensive strategic partnership signed between the two Asian countries an important priority for Iran, saying that changing and complex international and regional conditions have made strengthening comprehensive

relations more necessary than ever.

China is Iran's largest trade partner. Relations between the two countries have been expanding in recent years due to the Islamic republic's "Look to the East policy" policy.

Tehran and Beijing signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement in 2021 to reinforce their long-standing economic and political alliance. Both states are subject to different levels of illegal sanctions imposed by the United States.



Masoud Pezeshkian



Xi Jinping

Gaza aid flotilla presses on, shrugs off Israeli 'intimidation'

International Desk

A flotilla bound for Gaza with aid for the war-battered Palestinian territory said on Wednesday that it would continue its course despite what it called "intimidation tactics" by the Israeli military.

The flotilla of some 45 vessels carrying activists and politicians, including Swedish campaigner Greta Thunberg and Nelson Mandela's grandson Mandla Mandela, departed Spain last month with the aim of breaking the blockade on Gaza, where the UN has said there is a famine.

"In the early hours of this morning, Israeli occupation naval forces launched an intimidatory operation against the Global Sumud Flotilla," the organizers said in a statement as the vessels approached waters off Egypt, where previous attempts have been intercepted.

Spain and Italy, both of which have sent naval vessels to escort the flotilla, have urged the ships to stop travelling towards Israel's declared exclusion zone off Gaza.

After departing Spain, the flotilla stopped in Tunisia for 10 days, where organizers said it was targeted in two drone attacks, before resuming its journey on 15 September.

One of the flotilla's main vessels, the Alma "was aggressively circled by an Israeli warship for several minutes" the group, whose name means "steadfastness" in Arabic, said in the statement.

"Shortly after, the same naval vessel targeted Sirius, repeating similar harassing maneuvers for an extended period of time – before finally departing," the statement added.

Marie Mesmeur, a French lawmaker from the radical left-wing LFI party who is on board the Sirius, said that she saw at least two unidentified ships, one of which was "very, very



Members of the group of ships of the Global Sumud Flotilla to Gaza are seen moored at the small island of Koufonisi, south of the island of Crete, on September 26, 2025.
● AFP

close."

There was also "a military patrol boat with a huge light pointed at us", she said, explaining that during the incident all radar and internet communications on the boat were cut.

In another statement on X, the flotilla said it remained "vigilant as we enter the area where the previous flotillas were intercepted and/or attacked."

Israel has already blocked two attempts by activists to deliver aid by ship to Gaza, in June and July.

In June, twelve activists on board the sailboat Madleen, including Thunberg, were intercepted by Israeli forces 185 kilometers (115 miles) west of Gaza.

Italy and Spain dispatched naval vessels to escort the flotilla, following condemnation by the UN and EU of "attacks" off the Greek island of Crete last week when organizers said drones had dropped explosive devices on the activists' ships.

Spain's Minister for Digital Transformation Oscar Lopez, on Wednesday, urged the flotilla not to cross into Israel's declared exclusion zone, extending 150 nautical miles off Gaza. Italy, too, urged the activists to "stop

now" on Wednesday, after its frigate also halted at the 150-nautical-mile limit, broadcasting radio messages to the activists' vessels asking them to abandon their mission.

Famine in Gaza

Famine was confirmed in Gaza Governorate by the world's top authority on food security and will spread further within the strip unless Israel's strikes stop and much more aid is allowed by the regime into the Palestinian territory, UN humanitarian said on August 22.

"This is irrefutable testimony... It is a famine, the Gaza famine," UN relief chief Tom Fletcher told reporters in Geneva just as the report by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, a 21-agency partnership which includes UN entities and non-governmental organizations, was released.

More than half a million people in the Gaza Strip are facing catastrophic hunger conditions while more than a million more are in a food emergency phase, the report states. This man-made catastrophic famine could have been prevented by a steady flow of humanitarian aid into the territory, Fletcher pointed out.

Gov't spox: Presence, absence of IAEA inspectors in line with national interests

International Desk

Iranian government's spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said on Wednesday that Iran's approach towards the UN atomic agency is in line with the country's national interests, stressing that the presence or absence of the agency's inspectors in Iran is also within the stated policy.

Speaking during her weekly press conference in Tehran, Mohajerani said all the government's efforts were aimed at preventing further pressure on Iran's economy.

The issue of snapback mechanism which reinstated international sanctions on Iran, became a political tool and a lever of pressure against Iran, she said, adding, "All the measures that Iran is pursuing with the (UN atomic) agency are in line with national interests. The presence or absence of the agency inspectors is also within this framework."

In response to the question of whether Iran will continue enrichment of uranium, she said, "This is a matter that must be decided by the Supreme National Security Council."

On September 9, Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reached an agreement aimed at paving the way for resumption of cooperation, which had been suspended following the unprovoked Israeli-American attacks against key Iranian nuclear facilities in June.

The agreement with the IAEA was signed as a goodwill gesture by Iran to prevent the activation of the snapback mechanism by the three European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal.

Despite Iran's efforts to prevent the acti-



Fatemeh Mohajerani
● ISNA

vation of the mechanism, the three countries – France, Germany and Britain – activated the mechanism which paved the way for the reimposition of international sanctions that had been removed under the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Iran has rejected the reimposition of sanctions as "entirely unfounded, unlawful, and invalid" claims by the United States and the European countries.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in a letter to his counterparts across the world on Sunday emphasized that, "No valid legal act has taken place that could restore the terminated resolutions. To claim otherwise is an attempt to mislead the international community and to impose unilateral political agendas under the guise of United Nations authority."

He warned that such assertions undermine the integrity of the Security Council and pose a serious threat to multilateral diplomacy. The foreign minister underscored that Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal, terminated previous sanctions and set a clear timetable for their permanent expiration on October 18, 2025.

Araghchi argued that no state has the unilateral authority to reinterpret or extend its provisions.

Iran approves bill toughening penalty for spying for US, Israel

Iran on Wednesday approved a bill toughening penalties for those convicted of spying on behalf of Israel and the United States, as reported by AFP.

The bill was presented to Parliament on June 23, as Iran and Israel were engaged in a war that saw unprecedented Israeli strikes on the Islamic republic, which the US briefly joined.

Iran's president must sign off on the bill before it goes into effect. It comes after dozens of people were captured by authorities on suspicion of spying for Israel and the United States in the aftermath of the aggression

against Iran.

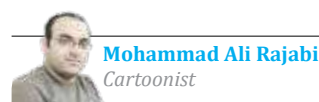
The text approving "tougher sanctions for spying and collaborating with the Zionist regime (Israel) and hostile countries, including the United States, on security and national interests" was approved, said the Guardian Council, the body responsible for overseeing legislation.

It did not specify which other countries were considered "hostile", according to state news agency IRNA, but said "all deliberate assistance is condemned as corruption on Earth" – one of the most serious charges in Iran, punishable by death.

The previous, existing law did not specify particular countries, and espionage was not necessarily considered a capital offence. The new bill sets a penalty of up to two years for "using, transporting, buying or selling unlicensed internet devices such as Starlink."

It also outlaws sending videos and images to "hostile or foreign channels that... could undermine national security," an offence punishable by up to five years in prison, according to IRNA.

The bill moreover bans "all illegal marches and gatherings during wartime."



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



VP says Iran eyes pioneering AI in region within three years

Economy Desk

First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Tuesday that Iran must overcome delays in adopting emerging technologies and secure the top regional position in Artificial Intelligence (AI) within three years. Speaking at a meeting of the National Committee for the Development and Application of Artificial Intelligence, Aref said the country must set clear priorities and policies in AI, while ensuring that ethics, security, privacy and decentralization remain central to its strategy, fvpresident.ir reported. "The country's pace in advanced technologies must increase several times over the current situation. Our goal is to achieve the targets of the 20-year national vision plan in emerging technologies, which means we should reach the number one position in

the region within three years," he said. Aref acknowledged that Iran has fallen behind schedule in applying emerging technologies across various sectors, calling for stronger focus on putting them into practice. He added that Iran has significant potential in the field, with a pool of educated and motivated youth. "We must give them the space to drive the country toward progress," he said. The vice president urged the full use of universities and research centers, saying the nation's scientific capacity must be directed toward addressing people's needs.

serve the welfare of the people," he added. At the meeting, Aref urged faster coordination among government bodies on AI policy and called for clear rules on data sharing to support national platforms.



First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref chairs a meeting of the National Committee for the Development and Application of Artificial Intelligence in Tehran on October 1, 2025. ● fvpresident.ir

Tehran greenlights conditional entry into FATF's CFT convention

Economy Desk

Iran's Expediency Council has approved the country's conditional accession to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (CFT), a council spokesperson said on Wednesday. Mohsen Dehnavi announced on social media platform X that, after four full sessions and joint committee meetings, the council approved Iran's conditional accession to the CFT in Wednesday's session, IRNA reported. The ratification is a key step toward improving Iran's position with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as accession to the CFT remains the final requirement for the country's membership in the taskforce. Expert reviews of the conventions had already been completed, leaving only the final session and vote. The council said the meeting was attended by the heads of Iran's three branches of government, some members of the Guardian Council, and the ministers of economy and foreign affairs. The majority of council members voted in favor of an amendment to Parliament's proposed terms, granting conditional approval for Iran to accede to the convention.

IRISL transports 27m tons per annum despite sanctions, CEO says



Economy Desk

The chief executive of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) said on Wednesday that the maritime organization had managed to transport about 27 million tons of cargo annually in recent years despite heavy international sanctions, underscoring the company's role in global trade. "Although the circle of sanctions against IRISL has tightened over the past decade, the company has been able to secure a considerable share in importing goods needed by

factories and production lines, as well as exporting Iranian products to target markets," Mohammad Reza Modarres Khiabani told ISNA. Iran has been subject to Western sanctions for its peaceful nuclear program for decades. Last year, the European Union and the United Kingdom imposed new measures against IRISL, citing Tehran's alleged support for Russia in its war with Ukraine. The company has also been under US State Department sanctions since June 2020, with Washington calling it the pre-

ferred shipping line for "Iranian proliferators and procurement agents." Modarres Khiabani also said, "IRISL has played a significant role in global trade," highlighting Iran's geographical advantage of proximity to open waters and major ports. To expand its reach, the company has adopted a five-year strategic plan that is reviewed annually, aimed at modernizing its fleet, acquiring new vessels, and leveraging its pool of skilled Iranian seafarers. According to Modarres Khiabani, IRISL currently operates 143 vessels under the Iranian flag in international waters. "The helm of IRISL's fleet is in the hands of experienced Iranian seafarers, who are renowned worldwide for their skill, expertise and commitment, and are in demand by many foreign shipping companies," he added.

ECO aims for common currency to boost regional trade, secretary-general says

Economy Desk

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is exploring the idea of a common currency to ease trade among member states, particularly those facing international sanctions, Secretary-General Asad Majid Khan said in an interview with Tasnim News Agency on Wednesday. "Finding a reliable way to trade without concern is essential," Majid Khan said. Iran is the only country among the ECO's 10 member states currently facing international sanctions. "Deep dialogues among financial experts are one of our most important needs. So far, we have not had enough of these discussions, while mechanisms for joint payments could emerge from such consultations and help expand regional trade," he said. The official added that reducing trade costs and transit times is another priority. "If we cannot shorten border crossing times, we will not achieve progress in trade. It is essential to work on harmonizing trade mechanisms among countries." The organization, which include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan, has also outlined long-term strategic goals for 2035, aimed at reducing customs barriers and strengthening economic



ECO Secretary-General Asad Majid Khan ● TASNIM

cooperation, he said. "ECO, with a population of over half a billion and vast energy and mineral resources, has the capacity to become one of the world's economic hubs, yet its share of global trade remains below 5% and intra-regional trade is only about 8%, far lower than the European Union or ASEAN," the ECO head said. "According to ECO statistics for 2023-2024, the region's total trade was about \$1.16 trillion, equivalent to 4-5% of global trade. Intra-regional trade accounted for only around \$110 billion, roughly 8-9% of member countries' total trade," Majid Khan stressed the need to review strategies, facilitate trade, reduce customs barriers, leverage technology, and even consider a common currency to improve economic collaboration. In agriculture, he highlighted the need to raise standards for products to obtain internationally recognized certifications, which would facilitate trade and improve global market access.

Majid Khan also noted the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, citing floods, severe droughts, forest fires, and melting glaciers. "These realities show that ECO member states need cooperation and synergy more than ever to face these threats," he said. At the same time, he called the region's abundant energy and natural resources both a major opportunity and a challenge that must be managed with a circular economy approach. The ECO Energy Center in Baku has been established to assist countries in addressing climate change and mitigating the impacts of natural disasters, the secretary-general said. Responding to a question about ECO's position relative to other regional organizations, Majid Khan said while groups such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization create a sense of competition, many members overlap and ECO has always focused on economic and trade issues, whereas Shanghai concentrates more on security and counter-terrorism. "These organizations can complement each other rather than compete," he said. He emphasized that no region matches ECO's long history, shared languages and cultures, and deep ties among peoples, which strengthen the motivation for cooperation. "Despite all technical obstacles that slow us down, the path of collaboration is ongoing and will not stop."

Trump-Netanyahu's plan ...

But in practice that is a misreading. Neither Netanyahu nor Trump has any intention of acting in favor of Palestinian rights. Both have shown the fiercest enmity; it is unthinkable that such hostility could suddenly turn into neutrality, let alone friendship. To believe otherwise would be naïve.

Do you think the plan could alter the stance of resistance

groups such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad, or will it fuel further escalation?

The Palestinian groups are on the right path. They may make use of the plan tactically — to underscore their demands, demonstrate their legitimacy and prevent extended pressure. But they will never accept it. Their path, sanctified by countless martyrs, will not be abandoned because of hollow promises made by two sworn

enemies.

In your view, what would be the consequences of the plan's failure for Gaza and the wider region?

The plan will change nothing. It's just talk out of Washington — no more than words on paper, with no practical effect. Everyone remembers Trump himself once declared, "We will turn Gaza into hell." Netanyahu said, "We will flatten Gaza."

And the current war is exactly that policy in action. How could this suddenly align with a state-building agenda? No one takes their words at face value, nor do they carry weight in practice. Its failure is guaranteed. The real balance of power is being determined elsewhere — inside the homes of ordinary people who continue to resist and lay down their lives day after day. Meanwhile, deeper shifts are al-

ready under way beyond their control. They failed to stop Palestine's recognition as a UN member state. They failed to clamp down on global protests. Now more than 50 ships of the Global Sumud Flotilla, involving activists, European politicians, artists, and other public figures, are sailing toward Gaza [carrying humanitarian aid and aiming to break Israel's naval blockade]. So the behind-the-scenes reality is this; Netanyahu and Trump

sought to prevent a grassroots Palestinian statehood drive and to lay the groundwork for a "dignified ceasefire." They will not succeed. Any ceasefire at this point is tantamount to acknowledging Israeli defeat, and the world can already see that Israel has failed. It remains stuck exactly where it began; demanding the release of hostages — a goal it still has not achieved, despite all the devastation wrought.

Every session of the General Debate at the United Nations General Assembly is an opportunity for heads of state and governments to raise important topics for their countries on the global stage, but for Iran, it has always been doubly important. Since the time is short for Iranian presidents to make a much-needed detailed speech, they have to pack their schedules with meetings with other delegations. Although there's so much that the other heads of state do not know about the false anti-Iran narrative that has been circulating for far too long, the same does not apply to the general public. This is why in recent years, Iranian presidents have sat down with journalists from various media outlets, and Masoud Pezeshkian was no exception. This year, Mr. Pezeshkian gave momentous interviews with the American NBC News and the Qatari Al Araby TV during the General Assembly. What follows next is our English translation of the most important parts of those interviews:

Iran ready to prove peaceful nuclear aims for sanctions removal

Trump should lead with trust-building act: *Pezeshkian*

INTERVIEW

NBC: I do have to ask you, is it strange for you to be in the United States? Our country bombed your country. You're here. What's that like?

PEZESHKIAN: First and foremost, we came to attend the UN General Assembly. The UN is based on the principle that nations can talk things over, coexist under laws, with no aggression, war, or crimes, and solve problems. We came with this mindset, yet unfortunately, we don't see those goals here. Still, turning up is better than not showing up at all.

Let's get to the news of the day and the potential snapback and return of sanctions. Why won't Iran allow UN inspectors to inspect all the bombed-out nuclear facilities?

That's the story they're pushing. We had an agreement with the agency [in Cairo] and were supposed to stick to it. Within the frameworks where the European trio was to hammer out talks, we also were to patch things up with the agency. Under that deal, they could come in and inspect, while we negotiate existing issues with the US. Access to enriched materials was also part of it. We were ready to play by the agreement. It's the US that doesn't want or have any interest in a peaceful and calm path — just as they tore up the JCPOA before.

But to be clear, your country will allow all the UN inspectors to all of the nuclear facilities that were bombed out? I just want to be clear on that.

These matters came up in talks, and it was agreed the snapback would be halted so inspections could get underway. The problem is that they refused to agree and want to press ahead with the snapback instead.

If the votes don't go your way and the snapback sanctions come back, will you ban the UN inspectors from Iran?

If they're going to pin the blame on us now for not allowing access to our nuclear sites, how do they expect to come after snapback?



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (r) gives an interview to Tom Llamas, anchor of "NBC Nightly News," on the sidelines of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, the US, on September 26, 2025.

● NBC

That's totally wrong. We allowed and wanted it to happen, all within international law and the NPT treaty, which we are members of, but they refused to act by those rules.

Mr. President, I'm not sure if you've seen the reports today, but there's this new report in the Washington Post. It shows a satellite image. This is the "Pickaxe Mountain," and it's alleging that right now, Iran is building a secret nuclear facility. What do you say to this?

If they speak honestly, since we have an agreement with the IAEA, they can come and see for themselves. Using satellites to claim things and then say they've "spotted" something is easy. We were ready, and still are ready, to cooperate with the agency. Instead of showing pictures and then cooking up frameworks filled with delusions, the agency should come and do on-the-ground inspections. We want to work with the agency under the law — why would they want to spread the rumor that we're headed for nuclear weapons based on baseless suspicions?

You mentioned nuclear weapons. Where exactly is that roughly 900 pounds of enriched uranium right now that is publicly unaccounted for?

That's not a hard task. The same IAEA should come, assess, and check out the process. The sites

under agency supervision were off-limits to them, but they illegally entered, and unfortunately, international bodies did nothing. Now, inspection, assessment, and verification aren't tough. We're ready for these things, so what's the need to trigger snapback?

For our American viewers at home, how do you explain that the reports that say your enriched uranium is at 60 percent, but all you need is 3.5 percent for civilian power purposes? Why is that uranium enriched to 60 percent, which is much closer to an atomic bomb?

What's clear is that the agreement process was in place, but President Trump tore it up. We agreed in talks on each side's responsibilities. We did our part, but when the US left the JCPOA, European countries also practically withdrew. They claimed not to have left, but all European companies meant to operate in Iran pulled out, and financial ties were cut. So, Europeans didn't uphold their commitments either. It was natural for Iran to step out of that framework, but this doesn't mean bomb-making.

We've clearly stated multiple times that this is not even on the table. The Leader, as the country's number-one figure and as the religious and intellectual leader of the society, has categorically announced it to be Haram (forbidden) to head towards nuclear weapons. When

it's declared Haram, no one in the Islamic Republic has the right to pursue nuclear weapons. This is a firmly held belief, publicly known, and unchangeable. Therefore, we are ready to carry on any cooperation needed with the agency.

Israel and the US are going to meet tomorrow in the White House as you probably know. There's this report I just showed you about this new — some are alleging — secret nuclear facility. Do you worry that more war is coming to Iran?

Look, we're not after war, but we are not afraid of it either. President Trump says they've come to bring peace, but the reality is that the current approach will set fire to the entire region. Can a few planes make a country surrender? Their actions have instead stoked unity and cohesion within our country and among Muslim nations.

I appreciate your answer, Mr. President. I'm going to ask you in a different format: Is Iran preparing for more war?

We have not started any war and won't. But if anyone attacks us, we will do our best to deal a crushing blow. We'll definitely keep beefing up our defense so no one can easily make aggressive moves against us. Why are people in Gaza being bombarded every day while international organizations claiming to be powerful can't do anything about it? Why has nothing been done to stop the killing of nearly 65,000 innocent people in Gaza?

Take me back to the 12-day war: As the president of a country, what was it like to see your country bombed, your top scientists killed, your top military generals assassinated?

Naturally, if your commanders are taken out like that while the world looks on, and countries claiming to defend human rights even back such atrocities, what feelings does that stir? Doesn't it breed hatred for their claimed humanity, laws, and human rights? Our commanders were martyred one night in their homes. Scientists were assassinated. What wrong had our scientists done? Just on the suspicion that they might one day build a bomb — does that justify killing anyone? What law in the global judicial system allows bombing someone just because they might do something in the future, and no one speaks up? This is a tragedy — not just for our country but for the region and perhaps the world. The Zionist regime's actions have deepened hatred in hearts.

There was clearly an intelligence breakdown. Do you believe that UN inspectors are agents of Israel, as has been alleged by some in Iran?

Look, an undeniable fact is we've had intelligence gaps. Exactly who did those things isn't confirmed, but is suspected. Some say it's likely those very people. Part of the issue is technology that can hand over information and addresses

to them, and another part relates to inspections, talks, and meetings that gave them away.

These issues have caused a wall of distrust within our country against those wanting to talk things over with us. Since we're NPT members and IAEA members, they should not have allowed attacks on agency-supervised nuclear sites. No one has the right to bomb installations under IAEA supervision, but they did, and these acts were not even condemned.

Some have said there were up to 21,000 people arrested in Iran after the bombings. What do you say to that allegation?

I don't have the exact figure now as our judiciary is following up on that, but what you call "an intelligence breakdown" involved some people, internally or for money or other motives, who may have been deceived or were deceivers. Certainly, some inside also carried out these acts. Wherever our intelligence system could identify access points, it stopped them. But to think 20 or 25 thousand were involved — I doubt such a number exists.

You spoke about your trip here and the reason why you are here. The Europeans have asked that you negotiate with the Americans. Have you been able to negotiate, have you been able to talk with the Americans?

Our foreign minister was supposed to sit down with the Americans, but before it could be done, they laid down the condition that we accept their terms first, then talk. If you have to accept their conditions beforehand, there's no point in talking — that's why no talks happened.

Even here in America, which claims to have democracy and freedom, a significant part of our delegation was not allowed in; Also, they rejected the accommodation we wanted near the General Assembly venue, forcing us to settle on other lodgings. They even stopped Iranian team members from moving freely or meeting other delegations.

To be clear, there's been no communication between the two countries during this UN General Assembly?

Our foreign minister had phone contact with Mr. Witkoff, and I personally met with the French president.

But nothing meaningful?

Well, we reached conclusions with France and other Europeans; They were to strike a deal with the American delegation on how to interact. The first agreement was rejected; Then, foreign ministers met again, reaching another deal with Europe. But again, Americans shot it down. The US is preventing an agreement between us and Europe in the international system.

The way we are sitting right now, would you sit across from President Trump like this to negotiate, to talk to him?



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (r) and Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi (l) hold a signed agreement on practical modalities to resume inspections in Iran, while Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty applauds, in Cairo, Egypt, on September 9, 2025.

● STRINGER/DPA

Talking is not the problem. President Trump says Iran shouldn't get nuclear weapons. We are ready for verification and confidence-building that we won't get that. But first, the wall of distrust must be broken down, then we can decide whether they're really sincere in talking to us or not. Solving all problems at once isn't manageable. Each

manager can only take charge of one or two processes at a time. The US and we have many issues; Better to tackle them one by one. Let's sort out the first, and once we see sincere progress, move to the next. We had an understanding in the JCPOA and were implementing it, but the US tore it up halfway. Now, how can we be sure if we

talk again, they won't do anything similar?

But I want to be clear: Would you meet with President Trump? Until the expectation Trump set is actually put into play, nothing will change. He must give a clear command so that what he wants can be implemented. Once it's en-

forced and we see it really happens, then we can sit down and talk with anyone.

Explain: What is the one command, you would say? The very order they say Iran must not have nuclear weapons — if that's enforced, we're ready for sanctions to be lifted and

talks to take off. We, in Iran, are prepared for the US to come invest and remove sanctions, then we can talk.

So, you would publicly state you are going to abandon any type of further enriching the uranium, any sort of march towards a nuclear weapon, to

meet with the US? Absolutely, we will do that. We have no intention to head towards nuclear weapons. Saying this means we're ready to cooperate under all international frameworks for verification.

The full interview first appeared in Persian on president.ir.

Implementing snapback to legitimize unlawful actions to come: *President*

Iran will neutralize malicious plans through broad ties with neighbors, Muslims

INTERVIEW

AL ARABY: The UN Security Council is set to rubber-stamp the implementation of the snapback mechanism in the next few hours based on a pre-arranged schedule. Does approving this mechanism mean the 2015 deal is doomed forever?

PEZESHKIAN: What's going down today at the Security Council is not grounded in existing laws; It's the result of pressure and power plays that the US and European countries are cranking up both regionally and internationally. The truth is, we've stuck to the signed 2015 agreement, but it was the US that tore it up. The Europeans failed to hold up their end of the bargain as well. After Trump ditched the agreement, most European and other foreign companies in Iran packed up and left out of fear of the US, and Europe didn't keep any of its promises. Now, those who broke the rules are trying to pin the blame on us as if we're the ones who broke the deal. This is the law of the jungle they want to impose worldwide, and they're using the same playbook against Iran.

Are you prepared to call back your previous proposal to Europe to suspend the snapback activation, or might you come up with a new, different offer?

Their previous proposal was really ineffective. They said, "Hand over your enriched uranium, and we'll give you three months to sort out other issues." But why should we hand over our uranium? If there's going to be dialogue, it should be about the whole issue, not us giving up our assets and then waiting around. If they're honest and want to ensure Iran does not pursue nuclear weapons, we have no such intent either. We can talk it through, prove it, and act according to assessments. If their intention is genuine, so is ours, and we're open to all kinds of verification. But we believe that's not their aim. The main culprit behind unrest, tension, war, and bloodshed in the region is the Zionist regime. Iran has never gone down that road, nor will it. We've reached out in friendship to all regional countries, and today, many neighbors see that we truly act on the principle of Islamic brotherhood. But the problem is, they don't want peace in the region; Chaos suits their interests better than stability.

You consistently stress that the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready for talks with the US, yet also say the US pulled out and ripped up the deal. The Americans claim the opposite — that



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) gives an interview to Qatar's Al Arabiy TV on the sidelines of the 80th UN General Assembly in New York, the US, on September 26, 2025. **TASNIM**

Iran refuses to negotiate. If both claim readiness, what's stopping these talks from getting off the ground?

Do you really think the US wants this? While we were hashing things out with the US in Oman, that same country was effectively giving the green light to the Zionists to strike Iran. They first claimed ignorance, but it soon came out that they were part of it, targeting our nuclear sites. The Zionist regime didn't just bomb nuclear facilities but scientists, neighborhoods, and civilians as well, acting as if no international law applies to them. How can a country that ignores human principles and its words can't be trusted claim to be ready for talks? If their real aim is to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons, the path is clear: The IAEA can oversee it. We've been ready to cooperate fully in this regard. So,

there's no reason to let this continue, for sanctions to tighten day by day while they claim, "We want to talk." Actually, they mean to say, "You accept whatever we demand, then maybe we talk; If not, we'll pull the plug." That's not dialogue; It's surrender, and the Iranian nation will never bow down to such conditions. We have no trust in them.

Iran has faced pressure from successive US administrations, especially the current one that came to power in January. With snapback implementation imminent, to what extent can Iran ride out these pressures and come through them?

What snapback will bring back mainly concerns support or equipment pertaining to nuclear weapons or related tech. But the sanctions the US has slapped on us go far beyond that. The sanc-

tions imposed by the US and allies are much broader and tougher than those snapback aims to roll back; Thus, nothing new will be added.

Their real goal is to stage an international legitimacy for their unlawful actions. This approach is not accepted by China or Russia — key Security Council members — nor by many freedom-loving countries that see through it. Everyone in the region knows this is just a pressure tactic against Iran to push through their malicious agenda. Still, I believe with domestic unity and cooperation, plus strong ties with neighbors and other nations, we will work out our problems and make headway, God willing.

Regarding Iran's nuclear file, who is the final decision-maker given the moves by the US and Europe? Even they question

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The Europeans' previous proposal was really ineffective. They said, "Hand over your enriched uranium, and we'll give you three months to sort out other issues." But why should we hand over our uranium? If there's going to be dialogue, it should be about the whole issue, not us giving up our assets and then waiting around. If they're honest and want to ensure Iran does not pursue nuclear weapons, we have no such intent either. We can talk it through, prove it, and act according to assessments. If their intention is genuine, so is ours, and we're open to all kinds of verification. But we believe that's not their aim.

this internally.

The country's overarching policies are set by the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution, based on consultations with the Supreme National Security Council and the body of statesmen. But per the constitution, the Leader makes the final call. Naturally, as the country's top figure, after gathering expert opinions from councils, parliament, and specialists, he decides how to move forward with the file.

Given the setbacks the Resistance Axis has faced regionally, will this delay or slow down Iran's open-door policy toward neighbors, including Saudi Arabia?

Before and after I took office, I've acted based on conviction: Muslims are brothers. The Prophet's message on the day of Mecca's conquest was clear: "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim," and "Together they are one hand against others." If Muslims in the region unite, accept that they are brothers, and set aside differences, the Zionists won't dare attack Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Qatar, Yemen, or any Muslim country — and no one could stop the Muslims.

The Middle East holds vast resources, and enemies have their eyes on Islamic lands and waters. Their goal isn't to build growth and civilizations but to stir up Muslim divisions so they can plunder our resources. They arm Zionists with the best weapons and the latest tech to shut up any country that speaks out. But if Muslims become brothers and unite, many problems will be solved. We're ready to team up with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, the UAE, Oman, Iraq, Turkey, and all regional countries. We're all Muslims, and hand in hand, by God's will, every problem or concern can be ironed out.

Regarding Iran's relations with countries like Lebanon and Syria, which have recently seen various changes, how will Iran's interaction with their current governments align with the brotherhood values you mentioned?

We have no issues; Every Muslim is a brother to another Muslim. We're ready to clear up misunderstandings with all Muslims — that's our duty. The world we live in is a test from God. If we follow God's commands and His book, we shouldn't disagree at all. Disputes arise from ego, greed, and neglect of each other's rights. On our part, we declare readiness to extend the hand of friendship and brotherhood to all Muslim brothers, wherever they are.

The full interview first appeared in Persian on president.ir.



Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi (C-R) gestures to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (5th-R) and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (C-L) after a group picture during the D-8 summit in Cairo on December 19, 2024. **president.ir**

World Para Athletics Championships: Salehi grabs javelin gold as Iran bags double medals on Day 5

Sports Desk

Elham Salehi claimed a second gold medal for Iran at the World Para Athletics Championships, winning the ultimate prize in the women's javelin throw event on the fifth day of the competition in New Delhi.

Representing the country in the F54 class, Salehi secured the top spot with her fifth effort of 17.06m, with Mexican duo Alondra Salazar (16.83m) and Rebeca Citlaly Cortés (15.48m) settling for the silver and bronze, respectively. This was Salehi's second medal in New Delhi, following her bronze-winning campaign in the shot put F54 event on the preceding day. Meanwhile, Zeinab Moradi also won a women's javelin medal on Wednesday, winning the bronze in the F56 division.

The Iranian girl registered a

final effort of 22.06m to finish behind Latvian gold medalist Diana Krumina (26.18m) and Raissa Rocha Machado (23.90m) of Brazil and take Iran's medal haul to six.

It was an all-Iranian one-two in the men's shot put F11 final on Tuesday, as reigning Paralympic champion Amirhossein Alipour defended his world title in style, shattering the championship record with a 14.59m throw. Three-time Paralympic medalist Mahdi Olad, who won the silver of the category in Paris, again had to settle for a runner-up finish behind his fellow Iranian, courtesy of a season-best 14.23 throw. Completing a podium that mirrored last year's Paralympic Games, Spain's Álvaro del Amo Cano took the bronze with a throw of 13.70m.

Amanollah Papi got Iran off the mark in New Delhi on Sunday, winning a bronze

in the men's javelin throw event.

Representing the country in the F57 class, Papi saved his best for the last attempt, registering a season-high 51.55m effort to win a consolation bronze.

Turkey's Muhammet Khavandi and Yorkinbek Odilov of Uzbekistan grabbed the gold and silver medals, finishing on with 53.3m and 52.06m, respectively.

There was disappointment for Iranian Alireza Mokhtari – a Paralympic bronze medalist last year – in the men's shot put F53 contest on Monday, after he was stripped of the silver medal due to a successful protest against his efforts.

More than 1,000 athletes from 104 countries will compete in the 12th edition of the World Championships at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium until Sunday.



● IRNA

CAVA Women's Volleyball Nations League: Iran eases past Kyrgyzstan in opener



● AVC

Sports Desk

Iran got off to flying start at the CAVA Women's Volleyball Nations League in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, coming out victorious over Kyrgyzstan in straight sets (25-12, 25-18, 25-13) on Wednesday.

"The players were in action for the first time in a while, and since it was their opening match, they were a bit nervous. I had expected them to replicate the form they showed in training, but the nerves got in the way. I'm still pleased with their decent performance and how they fought until the very last moment," Iran head coach Lee Do-hee said after the game.

A second outing for the Iranian girls at the tournament, featuring four Central Asian nations, will come against Tajikistan today, followed by a game against the host in the final round of

the league phase on Friday. "Tajikistan, who, like Kyrgyzstan, isn't a top-tier team. That's why I want the players to treat this as a warm-up for future major events. We need to see better execution of our practice drills and a more courageous style of play to ensure we're ready for the challenges that lie ahead," added the South Korean coach, who welcomed the occasion as a perfect preparation for the Islamic Solidarity Games, starting November 7 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Aytak Salamat, Shabnam Alikhani, Reihaneh Karimi, Negar Hashemi, Fatemeh Khalili, and Elaheh Poursaleh started the game for Iran, which settled for a third-place finish in last year's event.

Shaqayeq Hassankhani, Zahra Karimi, Paria Hajatmand, Noura Mohammadi, Fatemeh Manzouri, Nazanin Alizadeh, Zahra Salehi, and Ghazaleh

Bostan complete the Iranian squad in the Uzbek capital.

"Considering this was Iran's first match in the tournament, the first set was a bit of a struggle. However, from the second set onward, our team found its rhythm and we were able to play more comfortably and with higher quality. I have no doubt each player will only improve from here," Hassankhani said after Wednesday's victory.

"The level of competition here is very high. However, due to some changes in the schedule and hosting, fewer teams were able to participate. Nonetheless, we will strive to achieve the best possible result among the teams that are here," added the outside hitter.

The top two teams in the league table will square off in the final showpiece on Sunday, with the other two going head-to-head in the third-place showdown.

AFC Champions League Elite:

Ezzatollahi on target to help Shabab Al Ahli edge Al Ittihad

Sports Desk

Iranian midfielder Saeid Ezzatollahi scored a first-half winner as Emirati top-flight champion Shabab Al Ahli walked away with a massive 1-0 away victory over Saudi Pro League champion Al Ittihad at the AFC Champions League Elite on Tuesday.

Ezzatollahi rose highest to nod home Cartabia's corner with five minutes before halftime, as the visitors moved up to fifth in the West Zone table with four points from two points, having settled for a 1-1 draw against Iranian champion Tractor in their opener in Dubai.

Ezzatollahi's international teammate Sardar Azmoun, who has just returned from a sidelining injury, started the game on the bench before being introduced as second-half substitute.

The defeat added to mis-

ery for the star-studded Al Ittihad, which got off to a losing start in the Asian elite clubs' competition, suffering a 2-1 defeat against another Emirati

club Al Wahda two weeks ago.

"I am proud of the players' performance. The team spirit that has been building since last season



Shabab Al Ahli midfielder Saeid Ezzatollahi celebrates his winner during a 1-0 victory over Al Ittihad at the AFC Champions League Elite in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on September 30, 2025.

● AFC

was evident. The most important thing was the players' understanding of the technical strategy," the visiting head coach Paulo Sousa said after the game. "This was an extraordinary and unusual day, a match between two league champions, so we are proud of the team," added the Portuguese.

"I am proud that we are competing strongly in Asia and proud of the mentality of the players. "We completely controlled the first half but I have to admit that in the second half, we declined physically, which allowed Al Ittihad to advance. We could have, however, still doubled the score but we wasted many opportunities."

Shabab Al Ahli will next host PFC Nasaf on October 21 while Al Ittihad will aim to turn its fortunes around when it travels to face Iraq's Al Shorta.

Iranian mountaineer Hesamifard on verge of historic ascent

Sports Desk

Iranian mountaineer Afsaneh Hesamifard is on the verge of an unprecedented achievement, according to Reza Zarei, the chairman of the country's Mountaineering and Sports Climbing Federation.

"She will become the first Iranian woman to complete the ascent of all 14 peaks over 8,000 meters," Zarei said.

"She recently obtained her visa for Tibet and is now poised for

the historic feat by conquering Cho Oyu, the 8,201-meter peak located 20 kilometers west of Mount Everest, in the new future," added the head of the sport's national governing body. "The Ministry of Sports has rewarded climbers for conquering these mountains over the past two years. Given the historic nature of Hesamifard's climb, I am hopeful the Ministry will grant her a reward that reflects the magnitude of her accomplishment."



● IRNA

Walk through Zanzan Bazaar to experience history, vibrant traditions

Iranica Desk

If you want to journey into the heart of history, where the rhythmic clinking of copper-smiths' hammers resonates through the air, mingling with the rich scent of spices, intricate patterns of delicate filigree work, and the gentle murmur of everyday life, then step inside the historic of Zanzan bazaar. Known as the longest covered marketplace in Iran, this bazaar has always been much more than a mere center of trade — it embodies a living reflection of the culture, tradition, and enduring spirit of its people. Situated at the very heart of Zanzan, the bazaar flows like a vibrant river, alive, bustling with activity, and deeply intertwined with the daily rhythms of the community. Spanning an impressive 15 hectares, it was constructed in 1790 CE under the directive of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar. Even after more than two centuries, the bazaar continues to thrive with the same dynamic energy, welcoming visitors into its labyrinth of shops and workshops where history and commerce coexist, chtn.ir wrote. With 56 entrances opening into a complex network of alleys and approximately 940 shops, the Zanzan Bazaar hosts a remarkable diversity of trades, from artisan crafts to service providers. Each corner echoes with a unique blend of tradition and commerce that has, for generations, extended beyond mere buying and selling—this bazaar was also a vibrant space for the exchange of ideas, the preservation of customs, and the continuation of national and religious practices. The bazaar is divided into eight main aisles, organized according to production and commercial activity. Among the most notable are:



Bazaar-e Payeen (Lower Bazaar): This area houses the aisles of jewelers, cloth merchants, shoe-makers, saddlers, hat makers, chest makers, dyers, fruit sellers, and liver grillers. Historically, it served as the primary trading hub for local products brought from surrounding villages and towns through caravanserais. Today, many of these spaces have been transformed into warehouses for imported goods. **Bazaar-e Bala (Upper Bazaar):** The Upper Bazaar serves as the focal point for the production and sale of goods and related ancillary services. It includes

notable sections like the Qeysarieh Bazaar, Cloth Merchants' Bazaar, Hojjatoleslam Bazaar, Imamzadeh Bazaar, and Abdolali Beyg Bazaar. This part of the market is also dedicated to the sale of fabric and shoes. **Qeysarieh Bazaar:** Renowned for its luxury, delicate, and valuable goods, this section primarily hosts goldsmith shops. Its strategic location, branching from main aisles and connecting to Imam Khomeini Street and Sabzeh Meydan, makes it one of the most vibrant centers within the bazaar. **Caravanserais:** Among the



most precious architectural features of the traditional Zanzan Bazaar, caravanserais served as resting places for merchants and as sites for trading houses. Generally single-story, they feature central courtyards and multiple access points through corridors linking to the main aisles and city access routes. **Timchehs:** Apart from their unique physical design, timchehs are vital landmarks for pedestrian movement within the bazaar. Prominent examples include Haj Ebrahim Timcheh, noted for its turquoise dome visible from afar, Seyed Esmaeil

Timcheh, and Chahar Darbi Timcheh. **Squares:** Positioned near city gates and caravanserais, these squares acted as bustling centers for trade and exchanges. The Ahangaran (Blacksmith) and Varakhchilar squares, located to the east and west of the bazaar, exemplify these vibrant spaces. **Mosques:** The numerous mosques scattered throughout the bazaar signal its dynamic role across centuries. Among them are the Seyyed Mosque or Jaame Mosque, recognizable by its distant turquoise dome, and the Seyed Fathollah school-mosque.

Bathhouses: Traditional bathhouses played a vital cultural role in transmitting customs, rituals, oral traditions, and other societal facets. Haj Dadash Bathhouse, one of the oldest and the only stone-columned bathhouse in Zanzan, dates back 150 to 200 years. Its main dome rests upon four stone columns carved by artists from Hamedan. Presently, it has been repurposed into a traditional teahouse and stands directly opposite the Qaemi Mosque.

Architecture, historical significance
The impressive brick arches, traditional skylights, and aligned rows of shops create a stunning and majestic visual experience. Located along the major commercial route from east to west on the Qazvin-Tabriz axis, the bazaar connects the city's gates and has evolved into one of Iran's most vital economic arteries.

Tourism, souvenirs
Today, the Zanzan Bazaar holds a place not only as a commercial center but also as one of the city's premier tourist attractions. Visitors can admire historic architecture and absorb the traditional ambiance while purchasing unique souvenirs like exquisite filigree work, hand-hammered copperware, local charoq shoes, and renowned Zanzan knives. Even the old bathhouse, transformed into a traditional teahouse, offers a restful stop to enjoy authentic local cuisine. The historic Zanzan Bazaar, as the longest covered bazaar in Iran, stands not merely as a symbol of the city's economic past and present but as a living treasure trove of Iranian culture, history, and art, where every step reveals a new story of the people who have shaped this remarkable land.

Blue Mosque embodies Islamic world's turquoise heritage

Iranica Desk

The exquisite architecture and unique interior decorations of the Blue Mosque of Tabriz, East Azarbaijan Province, have established it as one of the most stunning historic mosques in Iran, symbolizing the glorious heritage of Tabriz. The mosque's name originates from the lapis lazuli and turquoise hues adorning its intricate

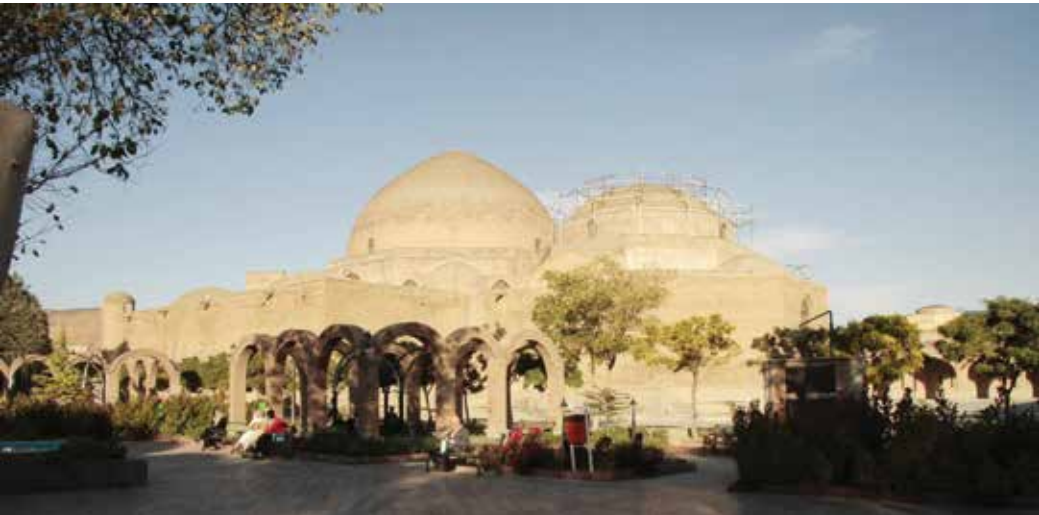
tilework. Built in the 15th century CE by order of Jahan Shah, son of Qara Yusuf, it is also known as Jahanshah Mosque and Mozafariyeh Mansion. Historian Kareem Meymantnejad told ISNA that the Blue Mosque, nicknamed the Turquoise of the Islamic World, is a masterpiece of the Qara Qoyunlu era. It was a royal mosque complex comprising a tomb, a Khanqah (Sufi lodge), a bazaar, and more. The mosque's

entrance once prominently featured Jahan Shah's name in gold leaf, which unfortunately has not survived. He added that the mosque was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 1931. It was severely damaged in a major earthquake in Tabriz a few years earlier, and restoration was carried out by cultural heritage organizations and leading architects of the period. Replacement tiles were

selected slightly lighter than the original to clearly mark the restored sections. Meymantnejad noted that the Green Mosque in Bursa, Turkey, was built about 20 years before the Blue Mosque of Tabriz, and the two share many architectural, tilework, and inscription similarities. The similarity in their names — the Blue Mosque and the Green Mosque — is also notable.

He emphasized that while the Green Mosque's tilework primarily focuses on the mihrab, the Blue Mosque in Tabriz is entirely immersed in art — calligraphy, tilework, and inscriptions. Each inscription within the mosque could fill a book on the history of Azarbaijan. Additionally, the mosque's courtyard serves as a historic cemetery containing tombs older than 1,500 years, reflecting the ur-

ban history of Tabriz. Meymantnejad lamented the lack of research and attention paid to this priceless historic and artistic heritage of Tabriz. Today, the area around the mosque is increasingly commercialized, diminishing its value. He urged that preserving this historic jewel requires not only maintenance but devoted effort and dedication, hoping for greater attention to be given to this monument in the future.





Iran launches 268 nationwide tourism projects, creating 2,830 jobs

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran inaugurated 268 tourism projects across the country on Wednesday, generating direct employment for 2,830 people and involving nearly \$11.17 million in investment. The nationwide initiative, timed to coincide with Tourism Week (September 27 to October 3), was led via video conference by Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi Amiri from Tehran. The projects encompass a broad range of facilities, including 33 hotels and hotel-apartments, 98 traditional and eco-lodges, 26 teahouses, 12 tourism complexes, and 99 other tourism units. Salehi Amiri described the investment as “more than economic activity; it is a cultural act,” adding that each restored

or newly built site contributes to showcasing Iran’s history and identity. “Every building we restore or construct adds to Iran’s beauty,” he said. The minister emphasized the government’s commitment to clearing obstacles for ongoing projects, noting that more than 2,700 tourism initiatives are currently underway nationwide. He highlighted the role of private investors as “the engine of tourism development” and pointed to eco-tourism as a strategic tool to prevent rural depopulation, stating, “Our slogan is one eco-lodge per village.” Regional tourism hubs were singled out during the ceremony. Salehi Amiri praised Ilam for its rich history, hospitable population, and artisanal

handicrafts. Qazvin, with its historical sites such as the Sa’d al-Saltaneh complex and proximity to Tehran, was described as having “strategic advantages” for tourism expansion. Razavi Khorasan, home to the pilgrimage city of Mashhad, was recognized for both religious and broader tourism growth, while Bushehr and the northern provinces were highlighted for their potential in maritime and coastal tourism. Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, head of the ministry’s Investment and Economic Affairs, said tourism has become Iran’s third-largest investment sector. During the current administration, 860 tourism projects were inaugurated, and 153 projects have surpassed 90% completion. “Private investment is flourishing, and public engagement



Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi Amiri addresses guests during the inauguration of 268 tourism projects nationwide on October 1, 2025.
● ILNA

with tourism projects has grown more than 30%,” Shalbafian added. He also noted that 64 hotels, 73 tourism complexes, and 36 eco-lodges have received targeted financial support, while agreements with free-trade zones are expected to further boost investment. Salehi Amiri reiterated the administration’s commitment to tourism development. “The government stands firmly behind this sector,” he said, noting that President Maosud Pezesh-



kian regards tourism as one of the three top priorities for the current term. “We are devoted to ensuring

that every corner of Iran with historical or cultural significance can benefit from tourism investment,” he added.

4,000-year-old Elamite relief discovered in southwest Iran



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said on Wednesday that archaeologists uncovered the smallest known Elamite rock relief, dating back to 4,000 years ago, in the southwestern city of Izeh, Khuzestan, depicting a king in prayer to Nahhunte, the Elamite god of the sun and justice. The discovery was made by a team led by Hossein Feyzi of Faculty of Archaeology (Susa) and Director of the National Base for the Cultural and Industrial Landscape of Masjed

Soleiman Ayoub Soltani, ISNA reported. It offers a fresh glimpse into Elamite religious rites and their cultural ties with Mesopotamia, the ministry said on its website. The hand-sized carving, about 26 centimeters across, shows a monarch seated on a plain throne, his right hand raised towards a solar disc carved above. In front lies a stepped platform, believed to have been used for offerings. Feyzi described the find as “small but momentous,” calling it the “smallest relief ever unearthed from the Elamites.” Located in the Ayapir district of Izeh, near the historic site of Ashkaf-e Salman, the relief was identified during a field survey involving archaeologists Feyzi, Soltani, Farzad Najafi and Mehdi Faraji. The team noted the site, known in ancient records as Ayapir or Alhak, had been a semi-independent city-state under

Elamite rule during the Middle Elamite period (1500–1000 BC). Although modest in size, the work shares striking iconographic features with larger Elamite reliefs at Kul-e Farah, Khung-e Azdar and Shahsavar, as well as with cylinder seals from Ur, Shimashki and Kassite Mesopotamia. “Its composition reveals a clear cultural dialogue across the region,” Feyzi said. Unlike most Elamite carvings cut into uniform stone, this relief was engraved on a patch of coarse conglomerate, a fragile surface that has left it vulnerable to erosion. Researchers are now turning to 3D laser scanning and photogrammetry to preserve the piece. Feyzi argued the find carries weight beyond its scale, “this carving not only introduces us to the devotional traditions of the Elamites, but also compels us to revisit the history of Elamite art and its connections with Mesopotamia.”

International Day for Older Persons

Iran, China collaborate to improve elderly care services

Social Desk

Iran is partnering with China to strengthen services for its rapidly ageing population, officials announced at a roundtable marking the International Day for Older Persons (October 1) at the State Welfare Organization of Iran. The collaboration aims to expand care infrastructure, introduce new technologies, and enhance social and health support for elderly citizens. With life expectancy in Iran exceeding 70 years, the country is experiencing one of the fastest rates of population ageing in the Middle East. China’s Ambassador to Iran, Zhong Peiyu, said China provides care services to 114 million people over 60 and is ready to assist Iran in enhancing elderly care. “We are committed to supporting infrastructure, social services, and technology transfer, including AI and robotic solutions for eldercare,” he said. The ceremony also unveiled a poster highlighting China’s healthcare assistance to people with disabilities and elderly citizens in Iran. Maryam Rahnama, a researcher at the Social Security Organization Research Institute said over 1.12 million elderly people currently live alone, a figure expected to rise to 3.5 million by 2051. “Solitary living places older adults at risk,” she said, highlighting the urgent need for targeted policy interventions. Officials stressed that women are disproportionately affected. Rahnama noted that 71.5% of elderly women living alone have no income, while 73% are illiterate. By 2051, most elderly women are expected to be educated and demand more sophisticated services. “The lifestyle of older women is set to transform,” she said, calling for robust public governance to ensure social protection. Mahmoud Abbasi, lead drafter of Iran’s Elderly Rights Bill, said only 1% of Iran’s 14,000 laws address the elderly, and these are scattered. The proposed 55-article bill covers healthcare, employment, family-care incentives, and legal protections, aiming to fill gaps and prevent social and financial vulnerability. Other initiatives in Iran include professional caregiver training and mental health programs. Mohsen Shatti, director of the official caregiver training system, said pilot projects will be launched in selected provinces to professionalize elderly care and adopt international best practices. Iran has also adapted the global elderly-friendly city framework. Ahmad Shahivandi, manager of the Strategic Plan for Elderly-Friendly Environments, said the



Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iran Keita Ohashi (L), UN Resident Coordinator in Iran Stefan Priesner (2nd L), head of Iran’s State Welfare Organization Javad Hosseini (3rd L), China’s Ambassador to Iran Zhong Peiyu (4th L), Japan’s Ambassador to Iran Tamaki Tsukada (5th L) and South Korea’s Ambassador to Iran Kim Junpyo (R) pose for a photo during a ceremony marking the International Day for Older Persons at the State Welfare Organization in Tehran, Iran, October 1, 2025.
● ILNA

program now covers nine dimensions, including tourism, and is active in provinces such as Gilan, East and West Azerbaijan, and Kerman. He urged dedicated budget allocations for seniors, stressing rural areas as priorities. Data collection efforts are ongoing. Majid Kousheshy, a demographer at the University of Tehran, said the national survey on ageing, health, and retirement, launched in 2011, has been expanded to include spirituality, traditional medicine, and pre-senior age groups. The survey aims to track vulnerabilities, including those exposed during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. International partners emphasized gender-sensitive approaches. Keita Ohashi, Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Iran highlighted the “feminization of ageing” and the need to empower elderly women socially and economically. UN Resident Coordinator Stefan Priesner noted that rapid ageing requires proactive planning to safeguard health and social inclusion. Japan and South Korea also shared experiences. Japan’s Ambassador to Iran, Tamaki Tsukada, detailed the use of robotics and AI in eldercare, while South Korea’s Kim Junpyo highlighted initiatives to create one million jobs annually for seniors and provide AI-supported community care.

Fifty young reporters to cover Isfahan Int’l Children, Youth Film Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Fifty teenagers were selected to act as the official youth press for the 37th Isfahan International Children and Youth Film Festival, slated to be held from October 4 to 8. The young reporters, aged 13 to 16, were chosen from more than 350 initial applicants who responded to the festival’s annual call for youth journalists. Following a combination of tests and interviews, 50 candidates were confirmed for the role, ac-

cording to Behnaz Abedi, head of the festival’s Youth Reporters Committee. Before the festival, the selected teenagers took part in a series of free workshops covering journalism, cinema, critical thinking, and content production skills. The training sessions, held from September 23 to 29, were designed to equip participants with practical expertise ahead of the festival screenings. “They will be at the forefront of festival reporting,” Abedi said, noting that the content generated

by the teenagers will be published under their own names in reputable media outlets, news agencies, and the festival bulletin. The inclusion of a youth reporter program, a longstanding feature of the festival, has been credited with nurturing the next generation of media professionals in Iran. Abedi emphasized that “many leading journalists began their careers here,” highlighting the scheme’s role in cultivating future talent for the country’s media landscape.