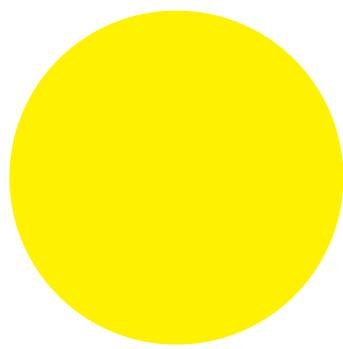


**Araghchi:**  
Tehran, Minsk to  
draw roadmap to  
make best use of  
capacities



## Eslami: Iran ready to consider IAEA protocol for targeted nuclear sites

**Kamalvandi:** Safeguards Agreement ignores post-war circumstances  
Iran holds 'firm legal position'

INTERVIEW



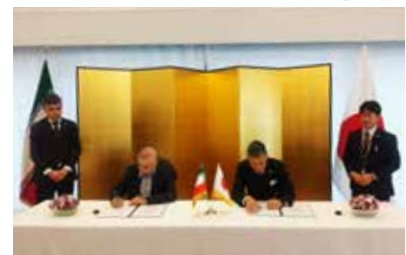
Off-field issues threaten to derail Iran's World Cup ambitions

PERSPECTIVE  
EXCLUSIVE



Japan pledges €210,000 in medical aid to shore up healthcare in southern Iran

INTERVIEW  
EXCLUSIVE



## Nuclear-assisted cancer diagnostics, therapeutics unveiled at Tehran tech expo

**AEOI:** Radiopharmaceutical portfolio expands to 70 products



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (2nd R) and Iranian nuclear chief Mohammad Eslami (R) unveil a radiopharmaceutical developed by the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in Tehran on December 15, 2025.

IRNA

## US National Security Strategy signals both opportunity & threat for Iran

**By Rahman Ghahremanpour**  
International relations analyst

OPINION  
EXCLUSIVE

The US National Security Strategy document, recently released by the Trump administration, states that Iran had previously posed a threat to regional stability and security but, following the June 2025 attacks, has been weakened and no longer constitutes a threat to the region. Decoding this assertion becomes possible only when the broader framework of the document, one that lays out US foreign policy, is taken into account. This assessment of Iran's position appears to carry three distinct messages. First, within the framework

of coercive diplomacy, Washington is seeking to convey to Tehran that it still wants an agreement in which Iran would make the maximum concessions while the United States insists on its longstanding position of zero enrichment. The Trump administration believes that Iran's weakened position obliges it to offer greater concessions. This runs counter, however, to the logic of coercive diplomacy, which emphasizes that its success increases when the coercing power—in this case, the United States—offers more incentives. By reiterating the correctness of Trump's Iran policy over the past year, the National Security Strategy effectively narrows the path toward reaching a new agreement. The second message of the document regarding Iran is directed at Israel. Tel Aviv favors an expanded US mil-

itary presence in the region. Yet the document implicitly sends a signal to Israel and the Jewish lobby in the United States that, since Iran has been undermined and is no longer a regional threat, there is no justification for pressuring Trump to align with a potential attack on Iran. This point is of considerable importance. Some pessimistic analysts have even suggested that the wording may imply that Washington has effectively handed the Iran file in the region over to Israel and does not intend to manage the issue directly itself. Put more simply, it may have left the door open for Israel to carry out possible military actions against Iran. The third message is aimed at three Arab states, namely Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, that are major investors in the United States. Given that these countries

have pledged to invest roughly \$3 trillion in the US economy in the coming years, reassurance about America's supportive role is critically important to them. They seek certainty that, should threats to their security arise, Washington will provide sufficient backing. The continuation of their investments depends on confidence that Iran does not pose a serious threat. By stating that Iran has been dented, the Trump administration is effectively attempting to shore up confidence and encourage these countries not to reconsider their investment commitments. Although the National Security Strategy broadly states that the United States will no longer engage in unnecessary military interventions beyond its borders, pressure from the Jewish lobby and possibly from Arab states has led the document to stop short of

explicitly declaring opposition to military action or regime change in Iran. Nonetheless, the overarching spirit of the document suggests that the United States will resort to such actions only in exceptional circumstances. In general terms, the strategy can therefore be seen as containing both opportunities and threats for Iran. It represents an opportunity insofar as Washington explicitly rejects state-building through regime change, and a threat because, in deference to the interests of its regional allies, the United States has chosen deliberately ambiguous language regarding Iran. From a more pessimistic reading, the document does not categorically rule out military action against Iran, yet it also does not advocate it. The conclusion, therefore, is that the US framework for dealing with Iran remains rooted in coercive diplomacy.



# Araghchi: Tehran, Minsk to draw roadmap to make best use of capacities

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that Iran and Belarus have agreed to draw a cooperation roadmap over the next year to make the best possible use of the capacities of both countries.

The top Iranian diplomat made the remarks in a joint press conference with his Belarusian counterpart Maxim Ryzhenkov in the capital Minsk.

"We agreed to draw a roadmap for co-operation between the two countries over the next year, specifying what steps should be taken so that we can make the best possible use of the capacities of both countries," Araghchi said.

Araghchi added that he held very good, constructive, and fruitful talks with the Belarusian foreign minister, as well as with Alexander Lukashenko, the president of Belarus, which played an important role in advancing bilateral relations.

Referring to the two countries' shared views on many international and regional issues, he said that Iran and Belarus maintain close cooperation in

international forums and that there are also common perspectives between the two sides on regional matters.

Araghchi noted that Belarus holds a special place in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic, stating that within the framework of expanding relations with independent countries interested in joint and constructive cooperation, Iran is ready to employ all existing capacities in both countries to secure the interests of the two nations.

He described last year's visits by the Iranian president to Belarus and Belarusian president to Tehran as important turning points in bilateral relations, adding that such visits led to a significant leap in political and economic cooperation between the two countries. Referring to a joint economic commission that was held in Tehran last week, the Iranian foreign minister said that important and valuable agreements were reached at the meeting, which reflects the serious determination of both sides to continue cooperation and make use of existing economic capacities.

Araghchi also noted that Iran and Belarus cooperate within the framework of regional and international institu-



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) shakes hands with his Belarusian counterpart Maxim Ryzhenkov during a meeting in Minsk, Belarus, on December 15, 2025.

IRNA

tions and mechanisms, including the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and BRICS, and are determined to use the capacities of such institutions in pursuit of their common interests.

Earlier in the day, the Iranian top diplomat also held a meeting with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. During the meeting, Lukashenko referred to the very good relations between Minsk and Tehran and expressed his country's readiness to expand relations with Iran in all areas, especially in the economic field.

The two countries also signed three cooperation agreements on strategic principles for countering unilateral measures and ways, strengthening the role of international law in international relations as well as cooperation program between the two countries' foreign ministries.



## Afghanistan's neighbors reject foreign intervention, sanctions at Tehran meeting

Special representatives of Afghanistan's neighboring countries firmly opposed any foreign military presence, urging countries responsible for the current situation in Afghanistan to contribute to reconstruction without using assistance as a political tool.

In a statement released by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the conclusion of the meeting of special representatives of Afghanistan's neighbors in Tehran, Iran said that the representatives emphasized regional integration and the centrality of the region in resolving existing issues and challenges, including some issues related to Afghanistan, Press TV reported.

The Tehran meeting brought together officials from Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Uzbekistan, China, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan on Sunday to exchange views on the latest developments in Afghanistan and the broader South Asian and Central Asian regions.

According to the statement, participants emphasized strengthening stability in



Special representatives of Afghanistan's neighbors pose for a family photo in Tehran, Iran, on December 14, 2025.

IRNA

Afghanistan and expressed their readiness to help achieve it if the Afghan side declares a need.

They underlined the importance of continuing economic and trade relations with Afghanistan with the aim of improving the livelihoods of the people of that country and pointed out the need for the country's integration into the political and economic trends of the region.

Expressing security concerns, they announced and emphasized their readiness to assist Afghanistan in combating terrorism, drug trafficking, and human trafficking.

The representatives further highlighted the international

community's responsibility to lift sanctions and release Afghanistan's frozen assets, support the return of Afghan citizens from neighboring countries, and provide conditions for their dignified return.

They supported all ongoing efforts to reduce tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, expressed readiness to help strengthen these initiatives, and called on both countries to return to the negotiating table to resolve their differences through diplomatic channels.

On Sunday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, during a high-level meeting titled "Afghanistan Developments Review," attended

by special representatives, said Afghanistan's stability depends on its integration into regional political and economic frameworks, urging cooperation among neighboring countries instead of reliance on outside interventions.

The high-stakes meeting comes as relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have sharply deteriorated in recent months, amid escalating border tensions and mutual accusations of harboring militants.

Kabul accused Islamabad of carrying out drone strikes on October 9 that killed several people in the Afghan capital, vowing retaliation in response.

The following days saw heavy cross-border clashes that left dozens of soldiers, civilians, and militants dead on both sides before Qatar brokered a ceasefire on October 19.

However, the deal has since been followed by several rounds of fruitless negotiations hosted by Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia in an effort to secure a more lasting peace.

## Eslami: Iran ready to consider IAEA protocol for targeted nuclear sites



Mohammad Eslami

IRNA

## International Desk

Iran's nuclear chief said on Monday that Tehran is ready to consider any protocol set out by the UN atomic agency to inspect Iran's nuclear sites which were bombed by Israel and the United States in June.

Speaking on the sidelines of a nuclear exhibition in Tehran, Mohammad Eslami said that inspections have been carried out at the nuclear sites which were targeted in June's attacks, but the important point is that the inspection of the damaged facilities is now being raised again. "There should be a specific protocol for these cases. An agency that neither condemned (attacks on Iran's nuclear sites) nor has any protocol for such circumstances, has no right to demand inspections."

He added that pressure from three Eu-

ropean powers, the United States and Israel "is not important to us and has no impact."

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi said on Sunday that the agency has resumed inspection activities in Iran but remains unable to access several of the country's most sensitive nuclear sites.

"We are only allowed to access sites that were not hit," he told Russia's RIA Novosti.

"These other three sites - Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow - are even more significant, since they still contain substantial amounts of nuclear material and equipment, and we need to return there."

Tensions between Iran and the UN nuclear watchdog have repeatedly flared in recent years, with relations being further strained in the wake of a 12-day aggression in June that saw Israeli and US strikes on key Iranian nuclear facilities.

Iran suspended its cooperation with the IAEA after the 12-day aggression against Iran as per a law adopted by Parliament. Tensions escalated as Iranian officials said the IAEA effectively provided cover for the strikes by declaring the country in violation of its non-proliferation obligations shortly before the bombardment and then failing to condemn the aggression.

## FM spox debunks claims on trio islands in China-UAE joint statement

## International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei dismissed on Monday baseless claims regarding the three Persian Gulf islands included in the final statement issued at the conclusion of the Chinese foreign minister's visit to the United Arab Emirates.

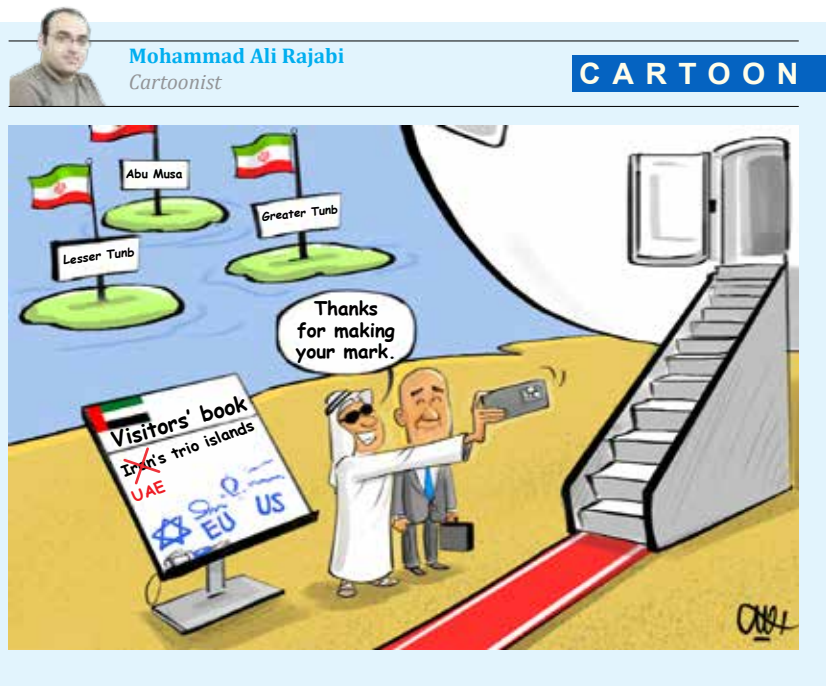
In their statement, the Chinese diplomat backed the UAE's efforts to peacefully resolve the issue over the three islands through bilateral negotiations in accordance with the UN Charter and international law.

Expressing regret over the UAE's con-

tinued insistence on exploiting the presence of visiting diplomatic delegations to raise territorial claims against the Islamic Republic, Baqaei condemned the repetition of "unfounded and incorrect" allegation concerning the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb in the joint statement.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman underlined that the three islands are an inseparable part of Iran's sovereign territory, saying any territorial claim over them is in clear violation of the principle of respect for the territorial integrity of states and the norms of good neighborliness. The three Persian Gulf islands have been

part of Iran, proof of which can be found and corroborated by countless historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and other parts of the world. However, the United Arab Emirates has repeatedly laid claim to the islands. The islands fell under British control in 1921, but on November 30, 1971, a day after British forces left the region and just two days before the UAE was to become an official federation, Iran's sovereignty over the islands was restored. On that November day, Iran officially issued land demarcation and ownership documents for the islands, reinforcing its sovereignty over the territories.





# Nuclear-assisted cancer diagnostics, therapeutics unveiled at Tehran tech expo

**AEOI: Radiopharmaceutical portfolio expands to 70 products**



First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (L) and Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) chief Mohammad Eslami unveil four new strategic nuclear medicine achievements at the 26th International Research, Technology, and Innovation Exhibition in Tehran on December 15, 2025.  
● IRNA

The event was attended by First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) chief Mohammad Eslami, and the vice president for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy, IRNA reported.

The newly introduced therapeutic radiopharmaceutical 177Lu-Alpha-MSH and the diagnostic agent 68Ga-Alpha-MSH target metastatic skin cancer. The officials also showcased an automated production system for radiopharmaceuticals treating metastatic bone pain, a common complication of advanced cancers. The National Nuclear Education Network was launched to connect academic and research institutions nationwide.

Aref highlighted the government's priorities, noting the administration aims to accelerate progress in emerging technologies to meet domestic needs and provide achievements to regional countries interested in collaboration.

At the ceremony, Eslami emphasized the AEOI's dual scientific and industrial role, "We are a successful symbol of sustaining the cycle of creativity and innovation — where knowledge is transformed into technology, and technology into usable systems and solutions, in the shortest possible time. This transformation — from science to practical, people-centered solutions — has been realized within our organization."

Eslami noted that these innovations are not only scientifically advanced but also socially and economically impactful.

He recalled that in 2023, Iran had announced 50 domestically produced radiopharmaceuticals, with 20 more in research phases. "Today, I am proud to report that we have reached 70 radiopharmaceuticals," he said.

Ali Bahrami Samani, deputy head of the Nuclear Science and Technology Re-

search Institute, confirmed the figure, noting that 20 new radiopharmaceuticals have been added to the national drug registry over the past two years.

"This year's health-related achievements go beyond previous developments, now encompassing advanced applications for liver cancer, glioma, and other complex malignancies," he said.

"The radiopharmaceuticals introduced today represent a qualitative leap, addressing more challenging oncological conditions than earlier generations."

He also highlighted the educational milestone of the National Nuclear Education Network, describing it as a unified platform now operational for universities across the country.

The 26th International Research, Technology, and Innovation Exhibition runs from Saturday to Tuesday at Tehran's permanent fairgrounds, showcasing Iran's scientific and technological capabilities, supporting innovative ideas, and strengthening connections among research, industry, and economic sectors.

## Economy Desk

Iran unveiled four new strategic nuclear medicine achievements at the 26th International Research, Technology, and Innovation Exhibition on Monday,

including two radiopharmaceuticals for early diagnosis and treatment of metastatic melanoma, an automated system for producing bone pain therapy drugs, and the launch of a national nuclear education network.

## Iran backs \$5bn in Africa investment, calls for strategic trade roadmap



## Economy Desk

Iran is seeking to expand trade with Africa, with the Export Guarantee Fund of Iran supporting roughly \$3 billion in investments across the continent, while the National Development Fund is backing about €2 billion in start-up and entrepreneurship projects, officials said at a seminar on Iran's Trade Atlas at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce.

Iran-Africa Joint Chamber of Commerce head Masoud Berahman on Monday highlighted Africa's large population and growing market, noting that the continent offers significant opportunities in goods, technical and engineering services, and investment, IRNA reported.

He stressed that infrastructure, policy planning, and government support are essential for tapping these opportunities. Berahman also pointed to the

absence of a clear trade roadmap. "In the export market, we have faced numerous challenges and need to systematically monitor markets and trade conditions of different countries," he said.

He urged stronger private-sector participation in economic diplomacy and coordination between the Trade Promotion Organization, the economic diplomacy department, and the Chamber of Commerce. Berahman called for a joint roadmap toward target markets, including Africa, with a focus on high-potential sectors.

Highlighting regional cooperation, he said relying solely on neighboring countries such as Iraq would not yield the desired results and emphasized the need for government-backed strategies. Berahman also underscored the role of trade attachés, noting that countries like Turkey have 44 trade attachés in Africa, while

Iran has only three, and called for better use of economic diplomacy tools.

Meanwhile, Taha-Hossein Madani, head of the Smart Governance Think Tank, said Iran's share of global exports remains low and urged strategies to increase high value-added goods while reducing raw material exports.

"Iran's share of global trade is 0.37%, approximately \$1.2 trillion. Exports to our 15 neighboring countries amount to about \$15 billion, which does not reflect their potential," he said, adding that the production of value-added products and expanding relations could increase Iran's share.

He also noted that Iran's exports to Africa remain below \$1 billion, despite the continent having over \$400 billion in trade. China remains Iran's largest export destination at \$14.85 billion, followed by the UAE.

Madani concluded that, facing trade wars and sanctions, Iran lacks a defined trade roadmap. "Operational programs and focused workstreams are needed to increase Iran's share globally, adjust trade balances with key countries, and strengthen specialized cooperation among experts," he said.

The seminar was held at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce as part of the ninth session on Iran's Trade Atlas initiative.

## Iran offers aircraft overhaul to carriers, eyes EU routes amid legal push

## Economy Desk

Iran's acting head of the Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) said aircraft operating in the country are repaired and maintained domestically, adding that the Islamic Republic provides maintenance services to planes from some neighboring countries and Venezuela, as the sector expands fleet capacity under the current administration.

Speaking at a press briefing on the sidelines of the 9th International Transportation and Logistics Exhibition in Tehran on Monday, Abouzar Shiroudi said safety remains the top priority, IRNA reported.

"The most important mission of the Civil Aviation Organization is to guarantee flight safety and security, and under no circumstances will safety be compromised for any other consideration," he said.

Shiroudi said Iran's operational fleet currently consists of 150 aircraft, which rotate through active service and scheduled maintenance cycles. He added that the country has expanded its air transport capacity by around 2,000 seats under President Masoud Pezeshkian's government.

Separately, Iran Air Chief Executive Taher Abdolhai said restoring flights to the European Union would require intensive diplomacy and a dif-



ferent bureaucratic process, with efforts under way by the airline's legal department and Iran's Foreign Ministry.

Iran Air has filed a lawsuit against the Council of the European Union at the EU's General Court, seeking to annul sanctions imposed in October 2024 that bar the airline from flying to the bloc over its alleged support for Russia's military campaign in Ukraine. "The resumption of flights to the EU requires intensive diplomacy and a different kind of bureaucracy, which is being pursued through the joint efforts of our legal team and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Abdolhai said.

He said that before flights to Europe were suspended, US

sanctions had already constrained Iran's aviation sector in areas including aircraft parts, flight operations, insurance, leasing and fuel supply. "For example, we were forced to use aircraft such as the Airbus A330 that could complete round trips without refueling, or we had to carry fewer passengers," he said.

Abdolhai said these challenges gradually reduced Iran Air's flight frequency until flights to the EU were ultimately halted for political reasons. He added that even airlines operating in neighboring countries that sought to carry Iranian passengers to Europe were denied permission.

"These issues will not be resolved overnight," he said.

## Over 1,000 km of gas pipelines to be launched by mid-March: Minister

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Monday that more than 1,000 kilometers of new natural gas transmission pipelines would come online by mid-March as part of efforts to shore up the stability of the national grid.

Paknejad said key projects included more than 300 km of gas pipelines in western and southwestern regions, 170 km in northern provinces, the start-up of 154 km of pipelines in the south of Sistan-Baluchestan province in the southeast, and more than

50 km in Ardabil province in the northwest among others, IRIB News reported.

He said that expanding transmission infrastructure and strengthening the resilience of the gas network were among the Oil Ministry's top priorities and were being pursued with determination under its executive plans.

"The development of the gas transmission network plays a crucial role in boosting the country's energy security and network reliability, particularly during periods of peak

demand," the minister said, adding such measures would make domestic energy supply infrastructure "more robust."

Iran runs one of the world's longest and most complex gas networks, stretching more than 500,000 km. Around 41,000 km consists of high-pressure trunklines, while the remainder supplies cities and villages. The network covers more than 95% of the country, a penetration rate higher than that of most other gas producers and consumers.

Natural gas dominates Iran's energy mix, accounting for more than 70% of consumption, well above the global average. More than 90% of industries and power plants rely on gas, which also heats the vast majority of households.

Last winter, the state-run National Iranian Gas Co. pumped a record 860 million cubic meters (mcm) per day into the grid, much of it from South Pars, the world's largest gas field.

Demand still ran ahead of supply by about



300 mcm per day, and the company's chief executive, Saeed Tavakkoli, has warned the daily shortfall could widen to 400 mcm this year.



# Kamalvandi: Safeguards Agreement ignores post-war circumstances

## Iran holds 'firm legal position'

**INTERVIEW** *Iran's nuclear dossier, from its inception, was transformed into one of the epicenters of political and nontechnical decisions, actions, and outlooks. This trajectory, over several past decades, engendered labyrinthine conditions both for the nation and for entities overseeing nuclear activities. Iran, throughout all the years it was exposed to sundry threats, resolutions, sanctions, and bombardments, endeavored to evince to the global community that its nuclear program never veered toward militarization and atomic armament production, nor will it. Yet, it requires nuclear energy — like any other country — as one of the paramount avenues for fulfilling diverse needs, and since it attained the capability to meet these needs indigenously by relying on internal prowess, it shall not capitulate to Western excessive demands and egocentrism.*

*Six months after the bombardment of Iran's nuclear facilities by America and the Israeli regime, an interview transpired with Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesperson and deputy for international, legal, and parliamentary affairs of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) concerning the organization's latest activities on one hand, and the nuclear dossier's recent evolutions on the other; the translation of a portion thereof follows below.*

**The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) bears responsibilities vis-à-vis the nation's needs, especially in energy and particularly in the electricity domains. As you are well aware, one of the organization's salient duties entails furnishing part of the nation's needs via nuclear power plants. So, please elucidate the organization's actions and programs, given the nation's relatively harsh electricity conditions, in this realm.**

**KAMALVANDI:** You raised a very good question. The nuclear industry is an industry that, in all dimensions of our lives, whether directly or indirectly, possesses a role and its presence is palpable. For example, the field of nuclear medicine is predominantly related to diagnostic, therapeutic, and palliative issues, as well as the production of radiopharmaceuticals, which are well known to everyone. However, if we desire to examine all the dimensions associated with the nuclear industry, they usually divide it in the world into two sectors of "energy" and "non-energy" issues. In the energy sector, the principal subject returns to nuclear reactors and the production of atomic electricity, which today has acquired immense significance throughout the world. For instance, the United States, which possesses the greatest number of nuclear power plants (approximately 100 power plants), decided to increase this number to approximately 400 power plants; that is, nearly fourfold. In fact, most countries of the world pursue an augmentation of the capacity of their nuclear power plants. Beyond this, the subject of small modular reactors is also raised, which, for diverse reasons including safety, technical, legal, and economic considerations, has attracted attention and compelled the world to move toward this direction with haste. The importance of nuclear energy derives from the fact that the electricity generated by it possesses exceedingly high compatibility with the environment. One of the objectives of the Paris Agreement is to see the volume of carbon emissions reach zero and energy production produce no pollution by 2050. It is correct that in the

Behrouz Kamalvandi

**elaborate regarding the objectives of these programs and the latest actions in this field.**

In the non-energy sector, three principal domains exist; first, the domain of human health, which includes nuclear medicine, and is familiar to everyone. Many times, radiopharmaceuticals have been utilized for diagnosis and treatment. Second, the field of agriculture, which begins at the stage of seed production and enables seed improvement. Especially because our country is located in an arid region, it requires the creation of adaptation against drought. Nature, as designed by God, arranges this adaptation in the long term and across decades or even centuries; that is, it may take a long time for a seed to adapt itself to environmental conditions. We can, through nuclear technology, accomplish this prolonged process in several months; that is, we can produce a seed that appears as if environmental messages have reached it and as if it is aware that it confronts water scarcity and

must prepare for such conditions. For example, at present, we have the "Kian" rice seed, which previously was harvested at approximately 2 tons per hectare and has now reached more than 8 tons; that is, it has increased fourfold and possesses high tolerance against drought. At a further stage and during the growth period of the product, such as the dates of the country's South, pests exist that can be eliminated not through chemical fertilizers and toxins, but through nuclear irradiation, without creating risk for humans or the product. The use of chemical pesticides causes harmful substances to remain in the product and creates health problems for humans, but the irradiation method possesses no such effects.

Furthermore, after the harvest of the product, this technology can also be utilized. For example, the codling moth is a pest that destroys approximately one-third of the product, but with nuclear methods, it can be controlled. Or, for example, the aflatoxin toxin, which becomes problematic for Rafsanjan county's pistachios, is

eliminated through irradiation.

In the domain of product warehousing, irradiation increases storage duration and reduces spoilage. At present, the wastage of the country's agricultural products is not small; with an annual production of approximately 140 million tons of product, between 20% to 30% of it is lost in various processes. These nuclear methods can considerably reduce this damage.

**The AEOI, for many years, has borne an important role in maintaining a portion of public health through the production of radiopharmaceuticals. What exactly is its role? What programs has the organization envisioned to increase the country's capacity in this field?**

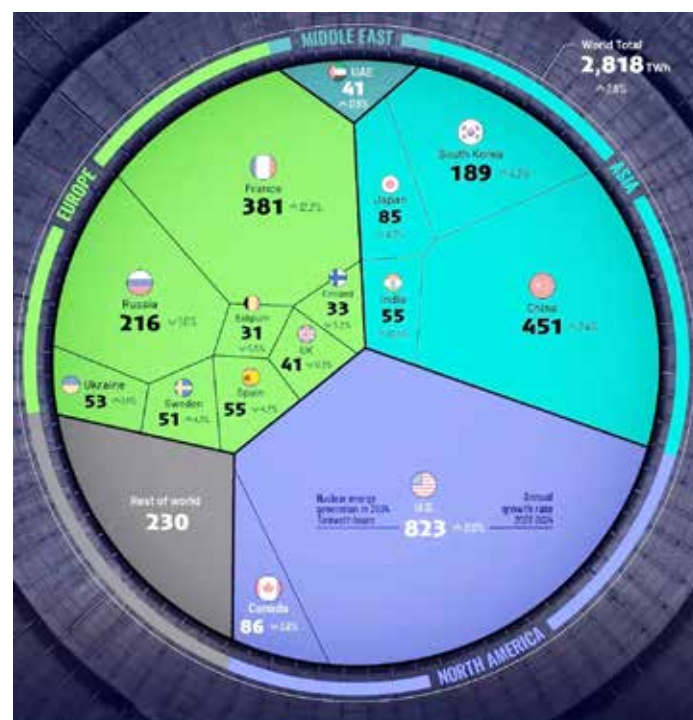
At present, the country's situation in this domain is very favorable. We produce approximately 73 types of radiopharmaceuticals, of which five or six are entirely nationally produced and have been exceedingly effective in the treatment of cancers. As you know, the country is confronting a cancer surge, and at present, we possess approximately 350,000 to 400,000 cancer patients. These patients require the utilization of radiative and irradiation methods, which can, independently or in combination with chemical treatments, produce effective outcomes.

In the industrial domain as well, there is practically no industry that does not require nuclear equipment. From the steel and petrochemical industries to refineries and even the cement industry, all require diagnostic equipment such as heat measurement, densitometry, and level measurement, which cannot be performed by conventional tools and are possible with nuclear equipment. For example, the precise measurement of the temperature of a furnace with 2,000 degrees is performed through this method. Also, in the domain of groundwater condition detection, aquifer depth, and similar methods, nuclear technology possesses extensive applications. In the environment as well, significant issues such as microplastics are raised. The oceans, because of the entry of large volumes of



The illustration shows US special envoy Steve Witkoff (bottom-L), Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami (top-C), and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (bottom-R) among various other photos, including undamaged Iranian nuclear sites and US military equipment.

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The diagram shows which countries generated more electricity using nuclear reactors in 2025.

ENERGY INSTITUTE

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In other domains as well, extensive applications exist, such as in the military sector — of course not nuclear weaponry, but in the domain of defense capacity. One example is submarines that operate with nuclear fuel and possess long-term underwater endurance. The higher the enrichment of atomic fuel, the shorter the interval required for its replacement. At present, France and the United States possess submarines whose fuel is replaced once every 30 to 40 years.



plastic, have become polluted. The fragmented plastic particles enter the aquatic nutrition on a molecular scale and ultimately create health problems for humans. At present, at the global level, nuclear methods are utilized to confront this problem, and their results have been effective. In other domains as well, extensive applications exist, such as in the military sector — of course not nuclear weaponry, but in the domain of defense capacity. One example is submarines that operate with nuclear fuel and possess long-term underwater endurance. The higher the enrichment of atomic fuel, the shorter the interval required for its replacement. At present, France and the United States possess submarines whose fuel is replaced once every 30 to 40 years. In general, the scope of nuclear technology and industry is exceedingly vast and creates high added economic value and plays a significant role in other sectors as well. This subject is beneficial. Alongside the two other technologies, namely quantum technology and artificial intelligence, these three domains shall shape the future of the world. Although nuclear technology has been raised for 80 years, it continues to be exceedingly important in the long-term horizon.

Our principal advantage in this domain is the knowledge and expertise of our human resources and the valuable experience we have attained during recent years. Unfortunately, precisely this point is what adversaries cannot stand; that is, a powerful Iran, whether in the nuclear, atomic, missile, or other strategic domains, is unacceptable to them. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the nuclear industry must not be viewed solely from the perspective of the Atomic Energy Organization; rather, it must also be viewed from the perspective of the populace because this industry is an important and indispensable capacity for the country.

**At present, Mr. Grossi and the IAEA Board of Governors believe that Iran, as a member of the NPT, must act in accordance with this treaty and emphasize the inspection of Iran's bombarded and damaged facilities. The question is whether, essentially, such inspection and presence are considered among the obligations of NPT member states, and what Iran's perspective regarding this request of the IAEA is.**

When a country becomes a member of the NPT, it accepts that, in addition to that convention, it must also conclude an agreement with the agency, which Iran also did. The INFIRC/153 agreement is formulated in a manner that presupposes normal conditions, not wartime conditions. However, Article 68 exists, which refers to "unusual circumstances"; that is, cases in which, by an "unusual incident or circumstances," the state "believes that there is or may have been loss of nuclear materials". In such circumstances, the country is obligated to notify the agency. In 1991, when this convention was under review, precisely this issue received attention.

At the time of the finalization of the NPT convention, a question was raised regarding this article of the agreement because, as you know, agreements possess similar structures. At that time, the representative of Australia asked whether this article also includes wartime circumstances or not. We examined the negotiations of 1970, that is, 9 years before Iran's Islamic Revolution. The agency's repre-

sentative at that time, who bore responsibility for preparing the groundwork for these agreements, responded that, officially, wartime circumstances are not included in this article, but, practically, there is no alternative but to have such an interpretation. Therefore, from a legal perspective, it may be said that the safeguards agreement did not provide specific grounding for wartime circumstances. The reason is evident; if access is granted under such circumstances, its meaning is that the agency would obtain information and transfer it to the Board of Governors, and ultimately, this information would reach governments. As a result, confidential, military, and usable information would reach our enemy, and this means that we would, by our own hands, provide them information that could form the basis of their future actions. No country does such a thing; I do not imagine that any country in the world that possesses nuclear facilities and is attacked would be prepared to grant the agency access under those circumstances.



The USS Hyman G. Rickover floats along the pier at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility in Bremerton, Washington, on September 23, 2024. A defueled nuclear reactor compartments from dismantled nuclear submarines sit on a pier to the right. ● EUGENE OLIVER/DOD

Our position is that in the sectors of the facilities that are undamaged, no issue exists; the agency can possess the necessary information because this information is not subject to enemy misuse. However, regarding damaged facilities, we must first reach an understanding and an agreement. This requires negotiation, and the safeguards system itself provides such capacity. The grounding for amending the agreement also exists; although its path is legal and must be pursued in Iran through the Parliament and in the agency through the Board of Governors and other legal stages. This is one of the ways. Because this matter is to create precedent, perhaps it is necessary to involve other countries as well; this event may also occur for them, and they cannot remain indifferent. Therefore, we now return again to our initial legal assertion. We had discovered a political pathway, on the condition that they also politically assisted. Now that this possibility is not available, we possess a firm legal foundation and position, and our belief is that the safeguards agreement provided no grounding for wartime circumstances. The safeguards system also permits this. Articles 20, 21, and 22 state that, if necessary, the agreement must be amended. If, in wartime circumstances in which a portion of these facilities has been destroyed and, as they themselves say, "annihilated," this is not a reason for amendment, what other reason could exist? When must the agreement be amended? These arguments of ours, when placed in a legal framework, are entirely logical; however, the subject receives political treatment —

that is, they say, "No, the same Article 68 of the agreement suffices." Of course, from a legal standpoint as well, capacity exists. If a dispute arises in interpretation and implementation, various stages exist that may even be referred to international arbitration or, if necessary, the International Court of Justice may intervene.

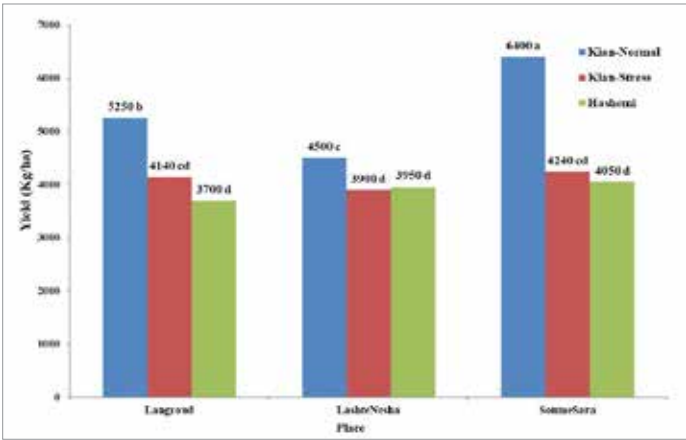
**This legal and rightful argument that you elucidated has surely been transmitted to the agency. Have Iran's concerns and apprehensions been specifically raised, and has a definite legal response been received? We are hoping for a legal response and a new framework because, in any case, the agency bears responsibility for the supervision of the nuclear activities of countries, and it appears that the solution must commence from them. Have they, essentially, provided any response to Iran's concerns?**

When they proposed meeting in Cairo, and negotiation was conducted there, they essentially ac-

cepted that the agreement was not adequate for the existing circumstances. Even the Cairo Accord talked about the post-war circumstances. There, preparations were made, and matters were divided into two categories of damaged and undamaged zones, and the pathway was selected through our own Security Council. When the agency accepts that this pathway must be traversed, and when, after considerable time, we speak with them, and they themselves reach an initial political agreement concerning those 72-hour deadlines — which in the agreement is based on Article 68, and then, in the safeguards approach, it becomes Article 73 — its meaning is that they accepted our legal argument. Otherwise, they could have decisively stated that the information must be delivered within 72 hours. Thus, from a legal standpoint, they accepted the issue, but their interpretation is that political pressure on Iran is effective. Instead of solving the matter legally, they desire to resolve it politically and through pressure. Therefore, if we maintain perseverance — and perseverance is not solely martial perseverance, but also continuity in pursuing our rightful legal claims and presenting legal arguments — we can continue the correct path.

**How, with regard to all security considerations, does our cooperation with the agency stand at present? Has it been completely terminated? In what fields does cooperation exist? Does the agency possess inspection presence in Iran?**

There were requests that the agency had, and there was the trajectory that was followed with regard to the law that suspends Iran's cooperation with the agen-



The bar chart shows the average grain yield (kg/ha) of Kian Rice, developed through mutation induced by gamma radiation in the local cultivar, under normal conditions and drought stress, as well as another brand of rice (Hashemi), across three cities in Gilan province, northern Iran, in 2017.

● JOURNAL OF NUCLEAR RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS

cy, which permits issues to be referred to Iran's Security Council to be decided. In connection with undamaged sites, we may state that the major portion of them has been inspected. Occasionally, cases existed in which, for example, one type of inspection was conducted once, and the next time, another type of inspection was conducted. There are diverse inspections — for design verification, inventory measurement, and such. We endeavored, in these severe circumstances, to maintain the utmost cooperation. The request we submitted to the Security Council, with a relatively reasonable interval, received its response, and we raised it. We are now approaching the subject of the damaged sites. I elucidated that we cannot easily permit access; there must certainly exist measures, and conditions must be created under which this becomes possible. Our most significant issue is the security issue. As I stated, in the safeguards agreement, this circumstance was not anticipated; that is, they wrote the safeguards as if no war would ever occur. Even Article 68, which refers to "unusual circumstances", intends flood, earthquake, fire, and similar cases. For example, it says you must notify within 72 hours that the materials have been lost. Now, if a fire occurred, it says that if 72 hours became four days, then they cannot accept that the materials have been lost. However, no country can perform such a task within 72 hours. We had 12 days of war just recently; that is, on the first and last day of the war, attacks were conducted upon our nuclear facilities. How is it possible to notify the agency within 72 hours, and for them to come and conduct verification? For this reason, I state that neither practically, nor rationally, nor legally, is the safeguards agreement adequate. I think that if we raise this subject in the agency, the countries of the world shall also reflect that the statute of this agreement must be amended. Until the agreement is amended and until threats exist, the ra-

tional and logical course is that the country exercise caution. For this reason, they must not expect normal behavior under normal circumstances from us. At least in private sessions, the officials of the agency state precisely this and confirm it; the countries also state this. But when they come under the pressure of the United States and European powers, they utter different remarks. Alongside our legal discussions, the capacities and capabilities of the country are also raised. They cannot impose many things upon Iran, provided that this resolve exists. We must sit with the agency, converse, find a method, and determine a procedure. We have also contemplated this subject. Because the principal subject of the agreement, which is mentioned in paragraph "d" of Article 1 of the GOV/2025/38 agreement, is to ensure "verification of the non-diversion of nuclear material" toward weaponry. We possess various other methods that create this assurance for them, even under "unusual circumstances" and under threat conditions. And when they observe, they shall state, "Yes, this is also a correct method." These are matters that are negotiable and require that we sit, provided that these negotiations are not coercive, meaning that both sides must persuade each other in negotiation, not compel each other. The principal point, which I repeatedly emphasize, is that we are not a country they can compel. If they accept this subject, they shall recognize that some of the desires, aspirations, and objectives they pursue must be abandoned. They desired many things, and even now they desire many things, but they must abandon these. If this occurs, things shall be easier for both sides. I think that with the agency, we can find a path; it is not as if no path exists. They desire paragraph "d" of Article 1; that is, assurance of "non-diversion". Various methods exist, and we can, in negotiation, converse with them regarding these methods.

The full interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi (2nd-R) meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (3rd-L) for the second time in two days in New York, the US, on September 24, 2025, on the sidelines of the annual session of the UN General Assembly. ● WANA

We had discovered a political pathway, on the condition that they also politically assisted. Now that this possibility is not available, we possess a firm legal foundation and position, and our belief is that the safeguards agreement provided no grounding for wartime circumstances. The safeguards system also permits amendments. Articles 20, 21, and 22 state that, if necessary, the agreement must be amended. If, in wartime circumstances in which a portion of these facilities has been destroyed and, as they themselves say, "annihilated," this is not a reason for amendment, what other reason could exist? When must the agreement be amended?



# Off-field issues threaten to derail Iran's World Cup ambitions

By Amirhadi  
Arsalanpour  
Staff writer

## PERSPECTIVE

When former NBA star Shaquille O'Neal drew Iran's name out of Pot 2 at the 2026 World Cup draw, football fans in the country began to dream of a milestone campaign at next summer's showpiece in North America.

Iran was handed a relatively favorable draw in Group G alongside Belgium, struggling Egypt, and Oceanian minnows New Zealand. With three teams from each group set to advance to the round of 32, Team Melli will be hoping to reach the knockout stage for the first time in seven attempts.

However, with less than six months remaining until the finals, the Iranian national team is already facing a series of challenges ahead of its opening match against New Zealand in Inglewood, California, on June 15.

The most pressing concern surrounds player availability for head coach Amir Qalenoee's trip to the United States. Iranian Football Federation (FFIRI) chairman Mahdi Taj said last week that the coaching staff would need "to have backups for any player who is not granted an entry visa" by the World Cup co-host.

In June, U.S. President Don-



ald Trump, citing security concerns, signed an executive order banning nationals from 12 countries — including Iran — from entering the country. Taj's remarks came only days after Iran was represented by a limited delegation at the draw ceremony in Washington, D.C., following the United States' refusal to issue entry visas for several Iranian officials, including the FFIRI chief himself. "We will be ready for different scenarios, as individuals who have completed military service in an or-

ganization not approved by the U.S. might face the same issues. We need to have backups for any player who is not granted an entry visa," Taj said.

"We have filed a complaint with FIFA, and I personally spoke with FIFA Secretary-General Mattias Grafström in Qatar regarding the matter. FIFA could have taken a firmer stance against the United States, and we expect it to do so if this happens again," he added.

Speculation intensified on Thursday when, in a

statement provided to Pro Soccer Wire, a U.S. State Department spokesperson did not rule out the possibility that Iranian players could be denied visas.

"The Trump Administration is committed to doing everything we can to support a successful World Cup. At the same time, the administration will not waver in upholding U.S. law and the highest standards of national security and public safety in the conduct of our visa process," the statement read.

"We adjudicate each visa

application on a case-by-case basis after rigorous review and thorough vetting to determine whether the individual is eligible under U.S. law."

Some reports in Iranian media in recent days have suggested that several Iranian players — including two regular starters — could already miss out on the tournament due to the locations of their military service.

### 'Pride Match' saga

Another issue facing Iran concerns its final group

match against Egypt in Seattle, Washington, on June 26. The fixture has been branded by local organizers as the "Pride Match" in support of the "LGBTQ+" community, representing sexual and gender minorities.

Organizers had previously announced plans to hold celebrations before and during one of the World Cup matches coinciding with the city's Pride Weekend.

Football authorities in both Muslim-majority countries condemned the decision last week, with Taj describing it as an "irrational move that supports a certain group."

In a statement issued last Tuesday, the Egyptian Football Association said it had sent a formal letter to FIFA, rejecting "in absolute terms" any activities linked to "LGBTQ+" support during the match.

The Egyptian FA said the initiative would conflict with the "cultural, religious and social values" of both Egypt and Iran, urging FIFA to ensure the match remains focused solely on football. It cited FIFA statutes on political and social neutrality, arguing matches should not be used to promote causes deemed "sensitive or of a contentious nature."

While organizers in Seattle have shown no sign of reversing their decision, FIFA has so far remained silent on the matter.

### Preparation problems

Iran's on-field preparations have also raised concerns, with Qalenoee eager to test his squad against elite opposition before traveling to the United States.

Taj said last week that, since the draw, "we have been working on setting up friendlies for the international breaks in March and June. We are already in advanced talks with Portugal, and we will likely play Portugal on June 6."

Since their final qualification match last June, Iran have competed in the CAFA Nations Cup in August, before facing Russia and Tanzania in October, followed by friendlies against Cape Verde and familiar opponents Uzbekistan in November.

"We have also approached Scotland, which resembles New Zealand's playing style, and Iceland, though we are far from an agreement with them," Taj said. "We will also aim to arrange a friendly with Spain when it visits Qatar to play Egypt in March."

With Iran yet to convince domestic supporters it can deliver a credible World Cup run — and with doubts emerging in recent months over whether Qalenoee is the right man for the job — the head coach can only hope for a smoother path in the lead-up to the tournament.

## Persian Gulf Pro League: Bifouma off the mark in Reds colors; Tractor back to winning ways

### Sports Desk

Summer signing Thievy Bifouma scored his first goal for Persepolis as the Tehran Reds edged Iralco 1-0 at home in the Persian Gulf Pro League on Sunday.

The Congolese striker struck three minutes into the game, slotting Milad Mohammadi's low cross into the top corner to seal Persepolis' fourth win in five matches since Brazilian head coach Osmar Vieira returned to the Reds' job in late October.

The hard-fought victory helped Persepolis — chasing an eighth top-flight title in 10 seasons — move back to the top of the table with 25 points from 14 games, ahead of second-placed Sepahan, who has 24 points

with two games in hand and was due to visit Foolad Khuzestan on Monday.

Iralco remain 10th with 15 points.

The result also saw Osmar — unbeaten in 19 league games across two spells on the Persepolis bench — become the fastest coach to reach the 50-point mark in Iranian top-flight history, achieving the feat in just 20 games.

Elsewhere, defending champions Tractor ended a two-match run of goalless draws with a 2-1 comeback victory over Paykan. Shahin Tavakkoli headed the visitors into the lead in the sixth minute, but his effort was canceled out four

minutes later

by prolific striker Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh, who tightened his grip on top spot in the league's scoring charts with his eighth goal of the campaign.

Dragan Skocic's side kept knocking on the door for a winner, and the pressure paid off 16 minutes from time when Mahdi Hasemnejad's close-range effort went past goalkeeper Erfan Esfandiari into the bottom corner. The victory — only Tractor's fifth in 13 matches — lifted the champions to third place on 21 points, level with fourth-placed Esteghlal ahead of the Blues' away match against Khaybar.

Paykan is 11th with 14 points.

Persepolis striker Thievy Bifouma (L) celebrates his goal with teammates during a 1-0 victory over Iralco in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Tehran, Iran, on December 14, 2025.

● FARSNEWS



## Iranian Volleyball Premier League: Sepahan stunned by Chadormalu; ShahrDari rallies past Saipa



Chadormalu setter Mohammad-Taher Vadi (18) is seen in action during a 3-0 victory over Sepahan in Iranian Volleyball Premier League in Ardakan, Iran, on December 14, 2025.

● volleyball.ir

### Sports Desk

The latest round of fixtures in the Iranian Volleyball Premier League saw Chadormalu stun Sepahan in straight sets (25-21, 25-18, 25-19) at home on Sunday. Having started the season with two successive defeats, Chadormalu has now won four games in a row, emerging as a top contender for a place in the close-season playoffs.

The home victory lifted Alireza Toloukian's men to sixth in the table with 11 points, while Sepahan's second defeat in six

games left the visitors in third place with 13 points.

Elsewhere, ShahrDari Urmia celebrated its fourth win of the season, coming from behind to beat host Saipa 3-1 (32-34, 25-19, 25-20, 25-21) and move up to fifth place with 12 points.

Saipa remain struggling in 12th place in the 14-team table, having managed just one win in six outings.

On Saturday, Shahdab Yazd continued its perfect start to the season with a 3-1 comeback victory over Pas Gorgan at home.

Mahdi Mahdavi's side dropped the first set 25-22 but bounced back to win the next three 25-19, 26-24, and 25-21, tightening their grip on the top spot with a maximum 18 points — four clear of defending champion Foolad Sirjan, which has a game in hand.

Paykan opened this week's fixtures with a 3-0 victory (25-20, 25-20, 25-22) over Mehregan Noor. The win lifted Paykan to fourth place in the table with 12 points from four wins, while Mehregan's fourth defeat left the club in ninth with seven points.



# Iran’s cultural diversity to be showcased at Hormozgan’s handicrafts expo

Iranica Desk

The Seventh National Handicrafts Exhibition will be held from 22 to 26 December 2025 in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province. This national event provides a distinguished platform to showcase the cultural richness of Iranian provinces and to strengthen the tourism value chain across the Persian Gulf region. Handicraft works created by veteran and young artists from 30 provinces across the country will be displayed in 153 specialized pavilions at Bandar Abbas Mall, offering a magnificent and comprehensive showcase of authentic Iranian identity, creativity, and traditional artistry, IRNA reported.

Bandar Abbas Mall, a large tourism, commercial, and cultural complex, functions not only as a shopping center but also as a multifaceted tourism destination. The complex includes a children’s tourism center, a health tourism center, two cinema halls, a study and cultural tourism center, as well as accommodation and hospitality facilities. The complex also features two

elements registered on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list — oud (the craftsmanship and performance of oud music) and Lenj (the traditional knowledge of building and navigating wooden vessels of the Persian Gulf) — while simultaneously introducing the historical, cultural, and tourism attractions of Hormozgan Province. Bandar Abbas Mall is located in the northern Golshahr district of Bandar Abbas.

The Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Hormozgan Province said the national cultural event offers a valuable opportunity to provide direct support for handicraft artists, introduce the cultural capacities of Iran’s provinces, and strengthen the cultural tourism axis in Hormozgan. Emphasizing the role of handicrafts in safeguarding cultural identity, he noted that handicrafts represent a living manifestation of Iran’s intangible heritage, indigenous knowledge, and the artistic expression of its people. National exhibitions, he added, create a platform for showcasing these capacities, facilitating the transfer of experience, and reinforcing



● chtn.ir

ing cultural continuity and intergenerational ties. Describing the National Handicrafts Exhibition as a driving force behind cultural tourism development, he stated that such events enhance the cultural appeal of cities, attract domestic and international tourists, increase the length of tourist stays, and contribute to the economic vitality of host destinations. Hosting the exhibition in Bandar Abbas, he said, presents a valuable opportunity to introduce Hormozgan’s cultural and artistic capabilities at the national level.

Referring to the economic impacts of the event, he explained that the exhibition enables the direct supply and sale of handicraft products, facilitates direct interaction between artists and audiences, and helps identify investment opportunities.

These outcomes, he noted, play an effective role in job creation, production growth, and the strengthening of the creative economy. He added that the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Hormozgan Province, with a strategic focus on supporting handicraft producers and expanding sales markets, is seriously pursuing the organization of national and

specialized events. Currently, more than 80,000 handicraft artisans are active in Hormozgan Province, about 60,000 of whom have received official operating licenses. In addition, licenses have been issued for 11 handicraft shops across the province. With more than 900 kilometers of coastline stretching from the border with Sistan and Baluchestan Province in the east along the Sea of Oman to the border with Bushehr Province in the west along the Persian Gulf, Hormozgan boasts the longest coastline in the country. The province is also home to Iran’s most strategic islands, endowed with vast oil and gas reserves. Covering a land area of 71,193 square kilometers, Hormozgan ranks as the eighth-largest province in the country. Owing to its strategic location along the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, Hormozgan enjoys a privileged position for commercial activities, particularly in the maritime-based economy. Its rich historical background further attests to the province’s exceptional strategic importance and its enduring value to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Mashhad conference to explore historical ties across Greater Khorasan

Iranica Desk

The First National Conference on the Archaeology, Culture and Civilization of Khorasan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia will be held on December 17 in Mashhad, with the participation of researchers, university professors, and students. Seyyed Javad Mousavi, Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Khorasan Razavi, said the conference is being organized

in line with the organization’s research mission and aims to create a scientific platform for the exchange of views among scholars, as well as to present the latest achievements related to the archaeology of Greater Khorasan, chtn.ir reported. He noted that planning for the event began last year in cooperation with national and world heritage sites and leading academic centers in the province, particularly Neyshabur University. The

conference will coincide with Research Week (December 13-19), and efforts are underway to ensure the continuity of this series of events in order to facilitate scholarly interaction, knowledge sharing, and academic dialogue among researchers interested in the cultural heritage of Greater Khorasan. Mousavi added that the many shared cultural elements between present-day Khorasan and vast regions of Afghanistan and Central Asia reflect

deep and enduring roots in cultural and archaeological contexts. Paying attention to these cultural ties, he said, will significantly contribute to deeper mutual understanding and the development of international cultural diplomacy. Mahmoud Toghraei, Executive Secretary of the conference, said the cultural event will include the unveiling of a book containing the conference proceedings, along with several selected lectures and

presentations, during which the latest scientific findings will be reviewed and discussed. He added that given the expansion and diversity of archaeological research in recent years, and the importance of explaining the historical role of Khorasan in the culture and civilization of the Iranian cultural sphere, plans are in place to continue organizing and holding this series of conferences in the coming years.



### The Reading Room

## Zhaleh Amouzegar illuminates ancient Iranian culture, mythology

Iranica Desk

Zhaleh Amouzegar is a distinguished scholar of ancient Iranian languages, a mythologist, and a leading researcher at the Iran Culture Foundation. She is widely recognized as one of the foremost figures in contemporary Iranian studies. Her mastery of Pahlavi and Avestan languages has consistently bridged the gap between rigorous academic research and the general public’s appreciation of Iran’s cultural heritage. For Amouzegar, the concept of homeland holds a special significance. In her view, the homeland is defined not by political borders but by the breadth of Iranian culture and collective memory. She regards Iran primarily as a civilizational heritage — rooted in language, myths, and an-

cient rituals — that shapes the identity of today’s Iranians. To her, homeland is culture rather than soil; memory rather than territory. Its survival depends on the preservation of language and storytelling, ensuring that this culture continues to thrive, according to IBNA. Amouzegar emphasizes that the Persian language is the most important link between Iranians and their past. Language, she explains, is a vessel where history and collective sentiment are embedded, and protecting it is tantamount to protecting the homeland. This perspective underpins her insistence on preserving ancient words, stories, and narratives, each carrying a fragment of the nation’s collective memory. Iranian identity, in her view, forms a continuous chain of mythological, historical, and cultural layers. Iran is nei-

ther frozen in the past nor confined to the present; it is a living entity that evolves over time. For her, being Iranian entails a cultural responsibility: the duty to safeguard heritage, language, and the cultural diversity of a land that has fostered shared narratives for millennia. Born on December 3, 1939, Amouzegar has taught at the University of Tehran for over 30 years. She holds a PhD in ancient languages and Zoroastrian literature from the University of Sorbonne and is often referred to by colleagues as the “Grand Lady of Ancient Iranian Studies.” Her notable works include «Zoroaster’s Mythological Life», “Pahlavi Language” (co-authored with Ahmad Tafazzoli), and Mythical History of Iran. Experts in Iranian studies consider her a pioneer in

ancient Iranian studies. Her publications and research provide essential tools for teaching and learning ancient texts, presented in clear and accessible language. She is proficient in English, French, Turkish, Pahlavi, and Avestan. Among her numerous honors, Amouzegar has received both national and international awards, including France’s Legion of Honour from the Ministry of Culture and the Iranian Sarv Prize for Cultural Heritage in 2016. Amouzegar is also an accomplished translator. Her joint translation with Ahmad Tafazzoli, The First Humans, the First King in Iran’s Legendary History (1989), won the Book of the Year award and a commendation from the University of Tehran. Her most recent work, “Iran Again”, offers readers another



opportunity to benefit from her vast knowledge and meticulous scholarship. In this book, she explores one of the fundamental recurring patterns in Iranian culture and mythology: the seven-stage structure. These stages are not merely a number but symbolize the arduous journey toward per-

fection — a test of worthiness and the passage from the material world to spiritual truth. She explains how heroic stages in the Shahnameh, often associated with the number seven, such as the Seven Labors of Rostam and Esfandiar, represent symbolic journeys of growth, evolution, and human perfection.



# Japan pledges €210,000 in medical aid to shore up healthcare in southern Iran

By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

## INTERVIEW

Japan has signed contracts to provide €210,000 worth of medical equipment to underserved communities in southern and southeastern Iran, aiming to improve healthcare access and enhance human security for low-income populations.

The ceremony took place at the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Tehran, attended by officials from local hospitals, universities, and charitable organizations.

The contracts formalize two Grassroots Grant Assistance (GGA) projects under Japan's human security aid program. The first provides a mammography machine for underprivileged women in Hormozgan Province, through the Noor Cancer Charity. The unit, valued at €143,541, will be installed at Imam Ali Hospital in Rudan, Hormozgan, enabling annual screenings for approximately 11,000 women.

The second project donates an ultrasound device, costing €66,162, to support low-income patients in Sistan-Baluchestan. The machine will be installed at the Zahedan University of Medical Sciences Hospital, facilitating around 7,300 timely examinations annually.

Tamaki Tsukada (R), Japan's Ambassador to Iran, and Hooshang Adhami, CEO of Noor Cancer Charity, sign a contract on December 15, 2025, in Tehran to provide a €143,541 mammography unit for installation at Imam Ali Hospital in Rudan, Hormozgan.  
● IRAN DAILY

Ultrasound technology is crucial for detecting a wide range of conditions, including cancers, and for prenatal care.

Tamaki Tsukada, Ambassador of Japan in Tehran, explained that these contracts were approved under this year's GGA program. "Since its launch in 1999, the Japanese Embassy in Iran has implemented 173 projects across multiple sectors, including primary healthcare, vocational training, and regional development, all aimed at enhancing public welfare," he said.

He emphasized that the program seeks to identify even small-scale initiatives that directly benefit local communities. "Because the GGA mechanism does not require formal intergovernmental negotiations, it is a fast-moving process. Projects typically move from request to implementation in under a year," Tsukada said.

"Its agility and flexibility stem from the small scale of the projects. Even in hard-to-reach areas, embassy officials



personally oversee all stages, from identification and design to execution and follow-up."

The envoy highlighted that this approach aligns with Japan's broader philosophy of human security, which prioritizes individual empowerment, risk reduction, and the protection of human dignity.

Speaking on the mammography project, Tsukada noted that breast cancer

is the most prevalent and deadly cancer among Iranian women. The new Fujifilm machine in Rudan will enable first-time annual screenings for thousands of women in the province, significantly improving early detection and care.

Regarding the ultrasound project in Sistan-Baluchestan, he added, "Ultrasound is an essential tool for diagnosing a variety of illnesses, including

cancers, and for providing proper prenatal care. This device, installed at the Zahedan University of Medical Sciences Hospital, will allow timely and accurate examinations for approximately 7,300 patients each year."

The envoy expressed hope to visit the project sites in the near future. "I look forward to observing the progress firsthand alongside Iranian partners and local stakeholders," he said.

## Iran, Georgia ink overland tourism, motorsport cooperation deal



### Social Desk

Iran's Touring and Automobile Club (TACI) and the Georgian Automobile Federation (GASF) signed a memorandum of understanding on December 14, aimed at expanding bilateral cooperation in motorsport and overland tourism, the clubs announced.

The agreement, signed in Tehran, seeks to streamline cross-border travel, enhance road safety, and bolster operational collaboration between the two countries' automotive and tourism sectors, ILNA reported.

The accord provides a framework for facilitating motor vehicle transit, offering reciprocal roadside assistance, and or-

ganizing motorsport rallies with a tourism focus.

It also covers technical cooperation on camper and caravan refurbishment and the issuance of international driving and travel documents. TACI's chairman and CEO Mohammad-Hossein Soufi and GASF President Alexander Lumadze formally endorsed the document. Soufi described the memorandum as a "practical step" to strengthen professional ties, while Lumadze highlighted its potential to "expand interaction" in motorsport and travel infrastructure.

Beyond recreational travel, the partnership signals Tehran and Tbilisi's commitment to integrating safety protocols and

Iran's Touring and Automobile Club (TACI) chairman Mohammad-Hossein Soufi (L) and Georgian Automobile Federation (GASF) President Alexander Lumadze sign a memorandum of understanding in Tbilisi on December 14, 2025 to boost cooperation in motorsport and overland tourism.  
● ILNA

technical standards across shared routes, potentially lowering accident rates and improving roadside service efficiency. Motorsport and adventure tourism are emerging as strategic niches for both nations. Iran's vast northern and northwestern landscapes, coupled with Georgia's mountainous terrain, provide natural venues for rally events and cross-border expeditions.

## Berlin festival honors Iranian documentary 'Inferior Shadows'

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Ramin Khalighi's documentary 'Inferior Shadows' claimed the Best Feature Documentary Award at the seventh annual Doc.Berlin Documentary Film Festival, showcasing at the historic Babylon Cinema in Berlin.

The festival, part of the global Doc.World network, highlights leading regional and international documentaries and fosters dialogue between filmmakers and audiences worldwide. Out of roughly 2,000 submissions, 23 films from countries including France, Lebanon, Mexico, the United States, Poland, Belgium,



Qatar, Canada, Estonia, Germany, and Iran were selected for the official program, ILNA reported.

Khalighi's film, which previously won the Best Doku-Box Film prize at the ninth DokuBaku International

Documentary Festival in Azerbaijan, offers a close portrayal of a family grappling with poverty and addiction, surviving through scavenging for recyclables. "The story is a journey between suffering and hope,"

Khalighi said. "It is an effort to endure and reach better days." During filming, three family members received treatment at a rehabilitation camp and returned to society, starting a new chapter in their lives.

Festival director Chris De Meister said in his closing statement that documentaries "do more than declare truth; they create spaces to confront moral dilemmas and spark dialogue."

He described 'Inferior Shadows' as "a profoundly brutal yet humane tragedy," noting that audiences remained silent for an extended period after the credits rolled, sensing "something rare and human."



## AUCTION SJSCO. D140406

Sirjan Jahan Steel Company is pleased to announce the sale and export of 20,000 tons **DIRECT REDUCED IRON (DRI)**, with the option to increase the contract quantity by up to 25% on basis of FAS at the Buyer's warehouse in Bandar Abbas, IRAN according to INCOTERMS 2020.

Interested applicants are hereby invited to obtain the tender documents by visiting the official website of Sirjan Jahan Steel Company at [sjSCO.ir](http://sjSCO.ir), through the Sales and customer portal, Tender and Foreign Tender section.

All documentation will be provided electronically.

All bids on conformity to tender instruction should be submitted no later than **Monday, December 22, 2025.**

For more information, please contact us at:

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