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Mar-a-Lago, the media, and Iran's deterrence: How narratives shape the battlefield



By Asgar Ghahremanpour
Editor-in-chief

OPINION

Today, wars are no longer confined to the physical battlefield; a substantial part of modern conflict has shifted to the media arena. Media outlets, aiming to shape public opinion and influence decision-makers, often present narratives that do not fully reflect reality. These narratives can be crafted so skillfully that distinguishing fact from fiction be-

comes challenging, and miscalculations may lead to serious consequences—including the outbreak of war. The recent meeting between Netanyahu and Trump at Mar-a-Lago, alongside media attention on Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' (IRGC) military exercises, exemplifies this phenomenon, where narratives frequently overshadow Iran's defensive realities. Iranian officials have consistently stressed that the recent exercises are intended for deterrence and defensive readiness against potential attacks, rather than offensive operations against any

country. Through these drills, the IRGC strengthens its operational capabilities to safeguard Iran's territorial integrity. Nevertheless, Israeli and US media continue to portray Iran as an aggressive threat. This discrepancy between reality and narrative underscores the difficulty of discerning truth in media wars and illustrates how narratives can be manipulated to justify international pressure or preemptive military actions. A significant risk in this context is miscalculation by adversaries. Israel and certain US actors may interpret missile movements or IRGC drills as signs of an

imminent attack and respond with preemptive measures. Such actions could rapidly escalate into another regional conflict, although, based on Iran's actual capabilities, the short-term probability is estimated lower. Nonetheless, heightened tensions or misinterpretation of defensive measures could increase this risk, emphasizing the importance of prudence, threat management, and a focus on deterrence. The current Netanyahu-Trump meeting differs markedly from those held before the 12-day war. Prior to that conflict, meetings focused largely on presenting

military options and securing US support for a preemptive strike on Iran. Intelligence shared with the White House emphasized Iran's missile capabilities and outlined scenarios for unilateral Israeli action or joint operations with the US, creating pressure for immediate action. Media coverage amplified these messages, framing Iran as an urgent threat. By contrast, the Mar-a-Lago meeting occurs at a time when Iran has strengthened its missile capabilities within a defensive framework while continuing active diplomacy and nuclear negotiations.

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Missile program meant for defense, not up for negotiation: *FM spox*

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Monday that the Islamic Republic's defensive capabilities are solely developed to deter attacks against the country and are not up for negotiation. Baqaei made the statement at his weekly press conference while addressing a question on renewed media campaigns in Israeli and pro-Israeli US outlets suggesting the possibility of a new act of military aggression against Iran under the pretext of its missile program.

The media campaigns hinted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would seek to persuade US President Donald Trump to launch an attack on Iran just as the one in June.

"The defensive capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran are designed to deter aggressors from even contemplating an attack on Iran and are in no way subject to dialogue or bargaining," Baqaei said.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman added that Iran has developed its missile program to defend its integrity.

Baqaei censured the "blatant hypocrisy and double standards" vis-à-vis Iran's missile program, which is meant to portray it as a "threat," adding that, at the same time, lethal weapons and even weapons of mass destruction are being funneled into the Is-

raeli-occupied territories to be used in the regime's genocidal war in the Gaza Strip. The spokesman underlined that Iran's Armed Forces are well-equipped to defend the country when necessary.

"Therefore, regardless of these malicious media campaigns, the Iranian nation, the Armed Forces, and all branches of the government will continue their path with a focus on their duties," he pointed out.

The Israeli regime launched an unprovoked war against Iran on June 13, assassinating a number of top military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians.

More than a week later, the United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occupied territories as well as the al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military base in West Asia.

On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the illegal assault.

'No protocol for inspection of damaged nuclear facilities'

On cooperation with the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Baqaei said there is no established protocol for inspections of damaged nuclear facilities, as such a situation has no precedent.

The spokesman said Iran at one point entered into talks with the agency to address the issue, resulting in a mutually signed understanding.

However, he added that Western parties once again obstructed the process by exploiting the 2015 nuclear agreement's dispute resolution mechanism in New York.

The repetition of the issue, he said, strengthened suspicions that the IAEA director general was seeking political leverage from a matter that "is not truly an issue."

Tehran refutes claims of involvement in Ukraine war

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson also debunked a statement by the European Council that has accused Iran of complicity in the Ukraine war, stressing that Tehran has neither interfered in the conflict nor changed its long-standing position in favor of dialogue.

Reacting to the European Council's statement, Baqaei said at a press conference in Tehran on Monday that the allegation that Iran, Belarus, and North Korea have provided military assistance to Russia in



the Ukraine war was nothing more than a repeated claim.

"This allegation is repetitive. In similar previous statements, the names of several countries, including China and Iran, were mentioned as parties that help Russia in this conflict," Baqaei said.

The spokesman reiterated that since the very beginning of the Ukraine conflict, Iran has declared that the problems should be resolved through dialogue and that Tehran neither intervened in the war

before nor is intervening now.

Baqaei emphasized that Iran-Russia relations are no way meant hostility toward other countries.

The European countries should look at their own behavior and consider why Europe's security has been put at risk as a result of NATO's hostile actions, he added, stressing that they must be held accountable for their conduct and stop the process of leveling accusations against others.

Army chief says Iran closely monitoring enemy's movements

National Desk

The chief commander of Iran's Army announced on Monday that the military forces are closely monitoring the enemy's entire movements and will deliver a "decisive" response to any hostile action.

During an inspection of Army units in western Iran, Major General Amir Hatami assessed the operational readiness and combat capabilities along the country's borders, saying the Army is consistently trying to enhance its preparedness to confront asymmetric and irregular threats.

Hatami underlined that troop morale remains high and that equipment and facilities have been upgraded based on lessons learned from the recent 12-day war. Praising the initiative, creativity, and new innovations observed among Army units in the region, he said the force has mobilized all necessary resources to confront



Chief Commander of Iran's Army, Major General Amir Hatami (2nd-L), visits Army units deployed in the country's west on December 22, 2025.

potential adversaries and that exercises are being conducted in line with military principles, particularly passive defense, to ensure realistic battlefield preparedness. "We closely monitor all enemy movements and will respond decisively to any acts of mischief," Hatami said. Stressing that territorial threats remain real, the Army chief said the forces' core mission is safeguarding Iran's territorial integrity and national independence. Iranian forces targeted and destroyed the enemy's advanced Heron drone immediately after it entered the country's western border

during the 12-day war in June, he said, warning of the same level of decisiveness in case of any new assault.

Hatami further noted that in the course of the Iraqi-imposed war of the 1980s, Iran did not lose a single inch of its territory.

"Today as well, the mission of the Army is to safeguard the territorial integrity and independence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are all striving to fulfill this mission in the best possible manner," he stated.

Hatami also highlighted manpower as a key pillar of military power, saying protecting personnel is a top

priority and that soldiers' lives are invaluable, while emphasizing the Army's readiness for sacrifice if required and its determination to prevent harm to civilians.

Hatami's field visit comes as media reports, citing unnamed sources and witnesses, said Iran held missile drills in various cities on Monday, in what was the second such reported exercise in a month.

The Telegram channel of Iran's public broadcaster and semi-official Nournews published videos of what appeared to be missile launches, without specifying the whereabouts.

However, the outlets said launches took place from the capital Tehran and the cities of Isfahan and Mashhad. State media later on Monday cited "informed sources" as denying that missiles were tested and saying the circulated images were of "high-altitude aircraft."

Iran to 'pound' Israel in case of another aggression by regime: *US analyst*

International Desk

A prominent American theorist and analyst emphasized in an interview that in the 12-day Israeli war against Iran, Tehran inflicted "enormous damage" on Tel Aviv, and in the event of another potential attack, the Islamic Republic, having learned lessons from the aggression in June, would "pound" Israel. John Mearsheimer said in an interview with German podcaster Max Otte, published by Financial Wise YouTube channel on Monday, that Iran used its cutting-edge missile power in the Israeli war in June and managed to hit the regime "very hard."

"Iran hit Israel very hard in that exchange in June. There's not much we hear in German in Germany about this and that Israel got hit pretty hard. The fact is Israel suffered enormous damage. And furthermore, by the time the war ended, remember it was a 12-day war, only a 12-day war. By the time the war ended, Israel was running out of defensive missiles that could be used against the incoming Iranian ballistic and cruise missiles. Just very important to understand that. And furthermore, all the evidence is that the Iranians got increasingly sophisticated at using their ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones to penetrate the Israeli defenses," Mearsheimer said.

"So, I would say to those people who think that Israel won a great victory, Israel's in



the driver's seat, and Israel can do this again, and it'll be another great victory, you want to remember that the Iranians have lots of ballistic missiles. They learned a lot from the 12-day war, and they will pound Israel again," he added.

Mearsheimer said one of the reasons the US administration was so anxious to shut the war down after 12 days was that the Iranians were talking about shutting down the Persian Gulf.

"That sent shivers through the United States, right? The thought of the Persian Gulf being shut down. So, if we go to war, we, meaning the United States and Israel against Iran again, not only is damage likely to be done to Israel, serious damage that is, but also there's a great danger that the straits will be closed and that the Persian Gulf will be shut down and that will have a devastating effect on the international economy."

Mar-a-Lago, the media ...

Netanyahu's focus now is on media narratives and warnings to Trump about Iran's missile program, seeking political support and portraying Iran as an immediate threat—even when operational reality does not confirm such urgency. The key distinction is that the current meeting revolves primarily around media pressure and narrative construction, rather than immediate military planning, illustrating how adversaries attempt to blur the line between fact and perceived threat.

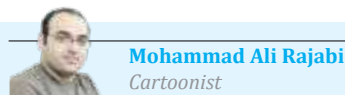
Transparent communication and accurate presentation of facts to both domestic and international audiences are crucial to reducing misperceptions and preventing provocative actions by adversaries. Properly representing Iran's defensive exercises can clarify the gap

between reality and media narratives, preventing the escalation of tensions. Diplomacy and nuclear negotiations remain essential for balancing tensions. Tehran has repeatedly expressed readiness to engage in talks and return to international agreements. This approach combines deterrent power with strategic diplomacy, aligning Iran's defensive capabilities with national security priorities and the prevention of potential conflict.

Recent exercises, beyond their operational and training value, send a clear message to adversaries: Iran is capable of defending itself, and any aggressive action against national security will not go unanswered. Simultaneously, continued active diplomacy and dialogue provide the primary path for reducing tensions and avoiding war.

The combination of deterrence and diplomacy remains Iran's key tool for safeguarding national security, maintaining regional stability, and managing potential miscalculations by adversaries.

Ultimately, the priority today is safeguarding national interests and preventing conflict, rather than becoming entangled in disputes that adversaries exploit for propaganda and narrative manipulation. In a media war, distinguishing fact from exaggerated narratives is challenging, yet focusing on reality and national interests is crucial for ensuring security and stability. By combining deterrence with strategic diplomacy, Iran pursues a peaceful and stable course, countering both media and military provocations, and reinforcing domestic and regional security.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Pezeshkian: Iran-EAEU cooperation seen as long-term strategy for regional power hub

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said cooperation between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) was a long-term strategy aimed at strengthening national sovereignty and helping build a regional power hub.

In a message to the Supreme Council of the EAEU, read out on Sunday by Iran's ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, at a summit in St. Petersburg, Pezeshkian said Iran was seeking to establish a successful model of regional convergence based on shared cultural and historical commonalities.

The high-level meeting was attended by the presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the prime minister of Armenia, marking a significant moment in the bloc's expansion.

"The future belongs to nations that pave the way for progress through cooperation and mutual trust," Pezeshkian said.

He identified trade and transport facilitation, energy security and technological development, financial infrastructure and people-to-people ties as key areas for strategic cooperation between Iran and the bloc.

The Supreme Council of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) summit, attended by the leaders of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as Armenia, is held in St. Petersburg, Russia, December 21, 2025.

● IRNA

Eurasia's central role in Iran's diplomacy

The president noted that while Iran is an active member of several international organizations, including BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and ECO, the EAEU holds a unique position in Iran's foreign policy.

He characterized the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement with the bloc in May as the beginning of a productive presence in this vital geographic expanse.

Pezeshkian described this step as "the most significant achievement of the year," providing a unique platform for national economies and traders to flourish.

According to the president, the real trade potential between Iran and the five EAEU members is far higher than current levels, and Tehran is firmly committed to a "trade leap" that will see volumes surge in the coming years.



Pezeshkian concluded by reaffirming that Iran's participation in the EAEU at the high-

est levels is a testament to its ironclad will to expand relations with all five members,

turning this historic opportunity into a turning point for collective growth.

Digital economy share of 10% of GDP 'logical and attainable,' Veep says



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (c) addresses a meeting of the Digital Economy Development Headquarters in Tehran on December 22, 2025.

● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said achieving the target of generating 10% of gross domestic product from the digital economy mandated under Iran's Seventh Development Plan is "logical and attainable, not a slogan."

Aref made the remarks during a meeting of the Digital Economy Development Headquarters in Tehran, attended by stakeholders from Iran's digital economy ecosystem, IRNA reported.

He stressed the necessity of embracing digital economy, warning that managing the economy through traditional methods would impose "heavy costs" on the

country.

"We cannot set aside the digital component and manage the economy through traditional methods," Aref said. "If we want scientific, economic, and commercial relations with the world, we have no choice but to tap into digital economy, though it has its own conditions and regulations."

Taking a lead in the digital economy, he said, would enable Iran to export its knowledge and experience to the region. Aref noted that the country's development plans are based on the governance of emerging technologies as a national priority, as explicitly stated in Iran's 20-Year Vision Document, which calls for securing "the

top regional position in science and technology."

"The benefits and risks of technology must be considered together," he said. "We should strengthen the positive uses through a range of tools, including domestic ones, and address the negative impacts with clear and effective mechanisms."

Criticizing Iran's current performance in global tech indicators, Aref said, "Our current rankings are not worthy of our youth. Our best position is 37th, while our national and youth potential is far greater, and we must achieve the top regional position in science and technology." During the session, digital economy ecosystem stakeholders presented their activities and raised their views, proposals, concerns, and challenges related to the sector.

Iran, Japan sign economic cooperation pact, eye post-sanctions surge



Senior economic and political officials from Iran and Japan pose for a photo during a high-level meeting at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce on December 22, 2025.

● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran and Japan signed a cooperation agreement between the Tehran Chamber of Commerce and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) during a high-level meeting in Tehran, where Japan's ambassador announced the revival of the economic section of his embassy. The event, held at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce and attended by senior economic and political officials from both countries, came as both sides seek to maintain ties despite ongoing sanctions and prepare for expanded cooperation in the post-sanctions period, IRNA reported.

The memorandum of understanding affirms both parties' commitment to ongoing collaboration in non-sanctioned and emerging sectors, with an emphasis on sustaining the presence of Japanese firms in Iran, strengthening economic diplomacy and laying the groundwork for a future expansion of bilateral ties.

Under the agreement, Tehran and Tokyo will work together to exchange trade delegations, organize joint training programs, and host business

matchmaking events designed to expand commercial ties between Iranian and Japanese enterprises.

Speaking at the meeting, Japan's Ambassador to Iran, Tamaki Tsukada, noted that Japanese companies "have maintained their presence in Iran despite the challenges posed by sanctions." He described the memorandum with the Tehran Chamber of Commerce as "a practical framework to enhance economic engagement and deepen cooperation between businesses of both nations."

Last week in an interview with Iran Daily, the Japanese ambassador expressed his country's interest in investing in Iran's oil, gas and petrochemical sectors and in partnering on the construction and rehabilitation of the country's energy infrastructure, stressing, however, that any such engagement depends on the removal of Western sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Iran has been under Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear activities. Beyond affecting the oil and energy sectors, the embargoes have imposed costs even on human-

itarian areas, including access to medicines.

At the event, Takafumi Suzuki, Deputy Director General of JETRO, said the organization was fully ready to operationalize the agreement and outlined the main pillars of future cooperation. "The exchange of trade delegations, market-knowledge training courses and business matchmaking events will be placed on the joint agenda with the Tehran Chamber," Suzuki said.

Meanwhile, Mahmoud Najafi-Arab, head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, addressed the gathering, which included board members, representatives, the secretary-general, and Japanese companies. He described the agreement as "a major step toward expanding bilateral economic relations," citing the longstanding economic ties between Iran and Japan.

Najafi-Arab stressed that "sanctions will not last forever" and urged Japanese firms to "take advantage of current opportunities to sustain cooperation and secure their place in Iran's future market." He emphasized Iran's official stance, noting that the government is working to lift interna-

tional restrictions, a point he said was intended to reassure Japanese businesses.

Non-sanctioned sectors in focus

Fereydoon Vardinejad, secretary-general of the Tehran Chamber, pointed to potential areas of Iran-Japan cooperation, naming pharmaceuticals, healthcare, education, food, agriculture and technology as non-sanctioned sectors with immediate potential for collaboration. He also said the Tehran Chamber was ready to engage directly with the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce.

Masahiro Yamada, chairman of the Japan Business Association in Iran, proposed the creation of an "e-sports educational platform" and cooperation in anime film production, which he said could help connect technology specialists from both countries.

Saeed Tajik, head of the Energy and Environment Commission at the Tehran Chamber, called for leveraging mutual capacities to develop infrastructure for air pollution monitoring and research in Iran. Referring to previous cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on modeling Tehran's air pollution, Tajik urged the revival of these studies and renewed collaboration on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including obtaining Japanese carbon-reduction certification within this framework.

IEA data shows surge in Iranian crude oil output

International Energy Agency (IEA) figures show that Iran has increased its oil production by a significant amount over the past year despite continued US sanctions aimed at restricting the country's ability to produce and export crude oil.

IEA data cited in a Sunday report by the Fars news agency showed that Iranian oil production had reached 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in November, Press TV reported.

The figure marked no change from October output but represented an increase of 110,000 bpd compared with production levels reported in December 2024.

The increase has come despite Iran remaining under a strict US sanctions regime that imposes heavy penalties on buyers of Iranian oil and on entities involved in its production and shipment. It has also occurred five months after Iran was involved in a conflict with

Israel, during which the United States carried out targeted attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.

A series of United Nations sanctions resolutions reimposed in late September have also failed to affect Iran's oil production and export levels.

Figures released by leading energy analytics firm Tanker Trackers in early November showed that Iran had exported an average of 2.3 million bpd of crude oil through much of October, marking

a new record since US sanctions were imposed on the country in 2018.

This compares with oil exports falling to historic lows of nearly 300,000 bpd in May 2019, when Washington tightened sanctions on Iran.

Experts say Iran's growing ability to produce and market its oil highlights the failure of US President Donald Trump's administration and its so-called maximum pressure campaign against Iran.



● SHANA

How Israel tried to pin blame for Bondi Beach shooting on Iran

PERSPECTIVE

A deadly shooting at a Jewish festival near Sydney's Bondi Beach on December 14 is being blamed by some Israeli officials on Iran, despite no evidence connecting the suspects to Tehran.

A father and son of Indian origin have been named as chief suspects in the attack, with authorities looking at possible ideological motivations, with paraphernalia from Daesh group, also known as the Islamic State (IS), allegedly found at the site.

Despite this, Israel has alleged an Iranian role in the attack, which left 15 people dead, even though Tehran and IS are sworn enemies. Plus, the former is inspired by Shia Muslim theology and the latter from the Salafi Jihadist school of Sunni Islam.

Israeli officials have told some local media outlets that they believe "Iranian-backed foreign terror cells" could be behind the attack, including Hezbollah, Hamas, and Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba.

"It was extremely well organised by a coordinated group, and from way ahead of time, and the amount of ammunition and long-range weapons all point to this," one security source told The Telegraph.

Israeli media have also promoted the idea of Iranian involvement in the attacks, with analysts presenting several scenarios and

possible Israeli responses if this proved true, but presenting little or no evidence to support their theories.

Another source told FOX News that Israeli intelligence gave "concrete warnings" to Australian authorities months ago about potential state-sponsored attacks on Australia's Jewish communities, with Iran named as a suspect.

Canberra also expelled Iran's ambassador in August, alleging that the country was involved in two anti-semitic arson attacks in Australia last year, but Tehran strongly denies the claims.

Despite this, Australian authorities appear to be investigating possible links to the Sunni extremist group IS, with no indication of an Iranian role in the attack.

Two flags associated with IS were found at the massacre site and linked to the two suspects - 50-year-old Sajid Akram, who was shot dead by police, and his 24-year-old son Naveed Akram, who is in hospital under police guard.

Naveed came to the attention of Australian intelligence in 2019 following his connection to two men jailed for foiled IS attacks. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese last week confirmed that the Bondi Beach massacre suspect was previously monitored for six months by intelligence before agents concluded he was not a threat.



Police inspect the horrific scene of a mass shooting at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, on December 15, 2025.
DAVID GRAY/AFP

Naveed was reportedly close to alleged extremists in Australia, such as Isaac El Matari, a self-declared "IS emir".

His father, Sajid, was originally from India, but had spent most of his time in Australia since entering on a tourism visa in 1998, authorities have said. He had a license for a number of rifles, which were used for hunting, according to reports.

Both Sajid and his son visited the Philippines in November for around three weeks, and police in both countries are investigating possible links to this trip and the attacks, with IS being active there. There is no indication yet linking the Bondi Beach attack to an organised terror operation, and police are still investigating the case to see possible motives and connections behind the killings.

Regardless of any political motivations behind the attacks, Australia is now rushing through gun laws to restrict access to firearms, while a Muslim Syrian, Ahmed Al-Ahmed, has been hailed for saving many lives after he bravely confronted one of the gunmen.

The article first appeared on The New Arab.



The Indian gunmen draped a Daesh (Islamic State) flag over their car before starting their bloody attack at Bondi Beach, Sydney, Australia, on December 14, 2025.
X



Father-son gunmen, Sajid and Naveed Akram, commit the Bondi Beach massacre on December 14, 2025.
SCREENGAB

“

A father and son of Indian origin have been named as chief suspects in the attack, with authorities looking at possible ideological motivations, with paraphernalia from Daesh group, also known as the Islamic State (IS), allegedly found at the site. Despite this, Israel has alleged an Iranian role in the attack, which left 15 people dead, even though Tehran and IS are sworn enemies. Plus, the former is inspired by Shia Muslim theology and the latter from the Salafi Jihadist school of Sunni Islam.

Gaza genocide: Australian Jews, massacre at the beach



By Jeremy Salt
Expert on Mideast history

OPINION

In the backwash of the Sydney massacre, numerous questions arise, puzzling and otherwise. One, which readers of PC may be able to solve for this writer, is who shot Ahmad al-Ahmad?

Ahmad was the man who tackled one of the gunmen, wrestled him to the ground, and disarmed him. He pointed the gun at the gunman but didn't fire, resting it against a tree as the gunman stumbled off.

In the context of this confrontation, the BBC said that he was shot "multiple times". Al Ja-

zeera reported that he was shot "during the incident". Social media reports had him being shot by "another gunman" (not the other gunman). Yeshiva World quoted his relatives as saying, "he suffered two gunshot wounds in his arm during the confrontation ... his injuries were sustained by stopping the attacker." However, the most interesting remarks were made by his former immigration lawyer, Sam Issa, after visiting Ahmad in the hospital. "He's having multiple surgeries," he said. "It's a serious injury, far more serious than has been reported. Doctors have yet to remove a bullet from the back of Mr. Ahmad's shoulder." Issa described Ahmad's wounds as "weird ... given the fact that

he was facing the shooter, how could he get a bullet in the back of his shoulder? It's strange." Whether fired from the back or penetrating from the front, we don't know, but from the video, no shots were fired during the struggle. At no stage was the gun pointed at Ahmad. He pushed it down, and it stayed down all the time. Mobile phone videos lingered on Ahmad well after the struggle, but there is no video of Ahmad being shot then, several times, according to reports. The surviving gunman and his father are of Indian Muslim ethnic background. The father came to Australia from Hyderabad 27 years ago and has returned only on a few occasions. The black flag seen stretched

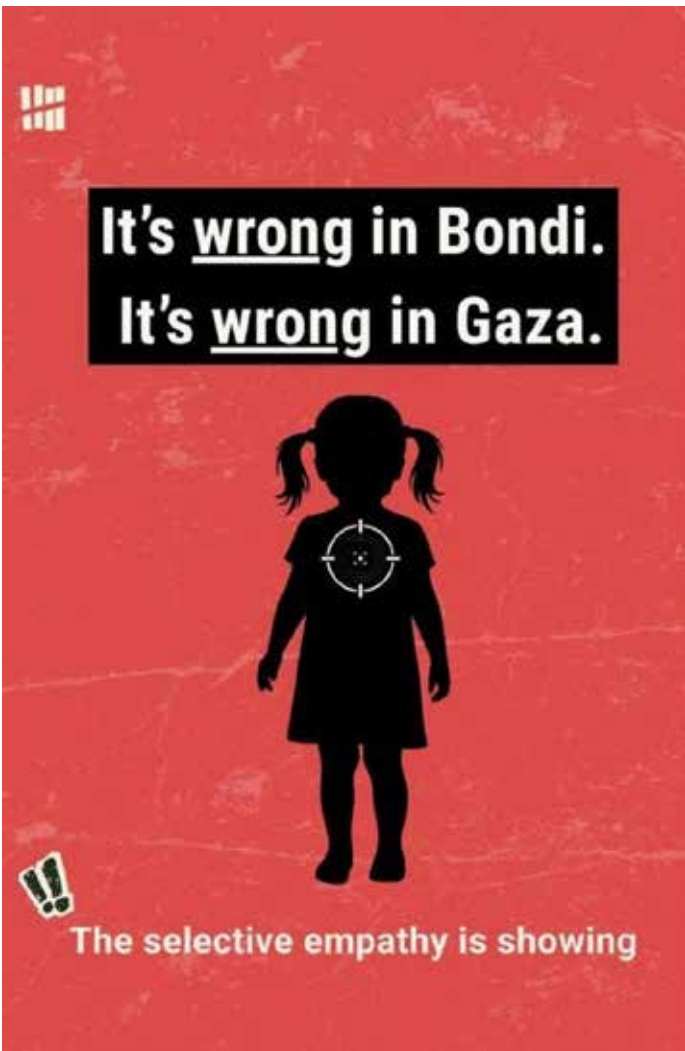
inside the windscreen of their car is widely used by takfiri Muslims, and is not necessarily evidence of attachment to the Daesh, also known as the Islamic State (IS). The two men had visited the Philippines, leading to speculation that they were in contact with IS, but there is no evidence of this yet. The presumption is that the motive for the massacre was Israel's onslaught on Gaza. There is another interesting aspect in view of the Indian connection. The Sydney festival was organized by the Chabad Lubavitch sect, whose Mumbai centre was attacked by militant Pakistanis in November 2008. Six people were killed, including three rabbis. The attack was general,

but the Chabad house and synagogue, frequently visited by Israeli backpackers, were singled out as a target. Fifteen people were killed in Sydney, including one child. One gunman, the father, was killed by police. The son was wounded and is now under police guard in the hospital. He has refused to be interviewed by the police, so his motives are not known. This was a murderous attack on a vulnerable community far from the Middle East, but Israel is a self-proclaimed Jewish entity, and while some Jews have separated themselves from Israel and Zionism because of the genocide, others still support it. Israel has sought to implicate all Jews in its activities from the

very beginning. The symbol of a religion flies from the pennants of the tanks destroying Gaza and the West Bank. It is a decal on the wings of aircraft firing missiles into high-rise office and apartment blocks in Gaza. It is drawn on the walls of the devastated and defiled homes in Gaza and the West Bank by triumphant soldiers, along with the same kind of abuse of Arabs now being scrawled on the walls of Sydney against Jews. Netanyahu advocates and justifies mass murder on the basis of the ancient Jewish past, as depicted in the Bible. West Bank settlers speak as Jews first when violating international law. As Jews responsible only to God and the promise of Abraham,

many defy Israel even as it protects them and builds further settlements. They attack and kill Palestinians, burn down their houses, and destroy their olive trees as Jews. Palestinians don't say "the Israelis are coming" as tanks, armored cars, and settlers approach. They say, "The Yahud (the Jews) are coming." For them, the Star of David is the symbol of menace, death, and destruction. The self-declared "Jewish state" is now committing genocide in Gaza, in the judgment of international genocide scholars and human rights organizations. The state organizes the genocide, the military carries it out, obeying orders as other militaries have done in violation of the laws of war. Palestinians and others have for decades stressed the difference between Zionism and Judaism. Zionism and Zionists are responsible for the catastrophe in Palestine, but the fact remains that they are still Jews. For Netanyahu, there is no difference. Being Zionist is what it is to be Jewish. In Australia, peak Jewish organisations such as the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the Australia Israel and Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), and the Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA) claim to be representative bodies of the tiny (about 120,000) Australian Jewish population. These organizations support Israel all the way, whatever it does. What they have been "supporting" since October 2023 has been summarized by Jeffrey St. Clair in Counterpunch. So far, Israel has killed at least 72,000 people in Gaza. That is only the low figure because of the high number of bodies buried under the rubble. The true figure is likely to be hundreds of thousands. At least 170,000 people have been wounded, including the loss of feet, hands, arms, and legs. Apart from the low estimate of 20,000 children killed, 45,000 have suffered "new war-related injuries", according to the UN's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Nearly half — 21,000 — have been disabled. Children have been deliberately starved, and hospital patients have died because of the lack of medicine or the widespread destruction of life-preserving equipment such as dialysis machines. It is hard to describe the current situation as catastrophic when it was already catastrophic. Can

there be a double or a triple catastrophe? The Palestinians are being washed out of their tents by floodwaters. Thousands of tents are available, but are prevented from entry because Israel pretends to regard tent poles as "dual-use" war material. Having massacred the Palestinians, destroyed their homes, deprived them of food and medical supplies, and starved them, Israel continues its air and ground attacks on these totally helpless people, in violation of the ceasefire. The short Al Jazeera documentary entitled "Target Iran" has covered Israel's attack on Iran in June. More than 1,000 civilians were killed, including scores of children. Then there is southern Lebanon, where, since the November 27, 2024, cease-fire, which Israel has not just broken but never observed in the first place, the UN says 127 civilians have been killed. OHCHR (the UN office for human rights) said four Israeli drone missile attacks in November 2025 on the Ain Al-Hilweh refugee camp in the coastal city of Sidon killed 13 civilians, including eight children. Israel's attacks on the south have included the destruction of village homes, factories, and construction sites. Scores of civilians have also been killed in Israeli air attacks on Syria in the past year. The core lobby groups in Australia, the Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA), the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), and the Australia Israel Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), support Israel, whatever crimes it commits. They dwell incessantly on October 7, as if Israel had done nothing to warrant such an attack. Their targets are not just Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, but any group, government, or individual in Australia standing up for human rights and international law on the Palestine question. They enjoy across-the-board support from federal and state governments and the media. Other groups include the Australian Jewish Association, which stands for "the strengthening of Jewish identity and support for Israel". It affirms that "Judea and Samaria" are "integral parts of Israel's history and religious history," and it opposes the creation of a Palestinian state. StandWithUS Australia is "proud to support Israel education and pro-Israel activity," while the Australian Jewish Funders "stand united in sup-



port of Israel". The small Jewish anti-Zionist organizations include the Jewish Council of Australia, which opposes the destruction of Gaza and has called on the federal government to impose sanctions on Israel. However, according to Jeremy Leibler, president of the ZFA, polling shows that the "overwhelming majority of Australian Jews are Zionists and, in particular, support Israel and the IDF since October 7." The poll he quoted shows 72 percent "support" Israel, 25 percent give uncritical support, and 55 percent give support "in critical terms". Parliamentary support for Israel includes the Australia-Israel Allies Caucus, which has federal and state branches. An MP member of the caucus, Andrew Wallace, describes Australia and Israel as "two pioneering and freedom-loving nations". The bolstering of trade comes from the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce, while media support for Israel is led by Murdoch's Sky News and News Corporation's daily, The Australian. Palestine is no longer just foreign policy. This is something politicians everywhere have to deal with now. Australia has a

population of about one million Muslims, and like a returning tide, the "Palestine question" is flooding back into the political mainstream of "Western" countries whose governments (like Australia's) created a Jewish settler entity in Palestine and have maintained it with strong political, military, and economic support ever since. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the Bondi attack as an act of "evil". The NSW Premier, Chris Minns, referred to "cowardly acts of terrifying violence," Federal Home Affairs minister Tony Bourke to an "appalling act of violence," and former opposition leader Tony Abbott to "an absolute atrocity There should be no place in Australia for the kind of evil we've seen this evening". None of these expressions has ever been used by any of them to describe the horrors of Gaza and the rampaging of soldiers and settlers across the occupied West Bank. Israel is never called out for its state terrorism. Instead, the politicians justify genocide as self-defence and stress the value of Australia's relationship with Israel, and have sought to defend the continuing

supply of weaponry or weapons parts to Israel through third countries. Even allowing for the unwillingness of politicians to speak directly, the statements made by Albanese and other politicians are totally removed from what is really happening on the ground. They can see what is going on in Gaza and the West Bank as well as any of us, but, as has been the custom in Australia for decades, they are not going to criticize beyond the limits imposed by the patchwork of organizations called the Israeli lobby. In late October 2025, Francesca Albanese released a report naming 63 countries that fall into the category of genocide enablers, Australia among them. "Framed by colonial narratives that dehumanize the Palestinians," she wrote, the genocide has exposed "an unprecedented chasm between peoples and their governments, betraying the trust on which global peace and security rest". The genocide cannot be dealt with by constantly backing away from what needs to be said openly and honestly, or by banning demonstrations by people justifiably horrified by the mass slaughter in Gaza. Irrespective of their religion, and, in fact, in defence of it, Jewish Australians should also be condemning outright the genocidal state that has the effrontery to speak in their name and threatens their safety by its actions. Some are doing just this, but others — still the majority — remain blindly attached to a state that could hardly do anything more to earn its reputation as a global pariah. If "never again" means anything, it means joining all those standing against the genocide being committed by Israel. After October 7, 2023, the Sydney rabbi Eli Schlanger wrote to Anthony Albanese to act firmly against terrorism "by removing the cloak of legitimacy around those who spread hate". Yet on a visit to Israel, Schlanger was photographed holding an assault rifle, holding a missile, hugging, kissing, and dancing with soldiers, sharing a meal with them, and clearly identifying completely with the inhumane assault on Gaza. This celebration of the mass murder of Palestinians ended with Schlanger's own death when he was killed during the Bondi massacre.

The article first appeared on The Palestine Chronicle.

Whether fired from the back or penetrating from the front, we don't know, but from the video, no shots were fired during the struggle between the heroic bystander and the gunman. At no stage was the gun pointed at Ahmad al-Ahmad. He pushed it down, and it stayed down all the time. Mobile phone videos lingered on Ahmad well after the struggle, but there is no video of Ahmad being shot then, several times, according to reports. So, who shot Ahmad al-Ahmad?

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the Bondi attack as an act of "evil". The NSW Premier, Chris Minns, referred to "cowardly acts of terrifying violence," Federal Home Affairs Minister Tony Bourke to an "appalling act of violence," and former opposition leader Tony Abbott to "an absolute atrocity There should be no place in Australia for the kind of evil we've seen this evening". None of these expressions has ever been used by any of them to describe the horrors of Gaza and the rampaging of soldiers and settlers across the occupied West Bank.



An influencer visits Ahmed al-Ahmed (L), the bystander who is hailed as the "Bondi hero". Al-Ahmed underwent surgery for multiple gunshot wounds, some of which are noticeable in the picture. ● REUTERS



The mother of Matilda Britvan, 10, one of the victims of a recent mass shooting that targeted a Jewish holiday celebration, hugs her son after speaking at a vigil at Bondi Beach, in Sydney, Australia, on December 16, 2025. ● HOLLIE ADAMS/REUTERS

Iran lines up 21 players for Asian Handball Championship



IRIHF

Sports Desk

Spanish head coach Rafael Guijosa Castillo has named a provisional 21-man squad as Iran began an eight-day training camp in preparation for the upcoming Asian Men's Handball Championship, which starts on January 15 in Kuwait. Iran has been drawn in Group D at the 22nd edition of the flagship continental event alongside two-time champions Japan — beaten by Qatar in the 2024 final — four-time bronze medalist Saudi Arabia, and Australia. Iran will get its campaign underway against Saudi Arabia on the opening day of the competition before taking on Australia two days later. The final day of the preliminary round will see Iran face

Japan on January 19 — a rematch of their main-round meeting at the previous edition, which Japan won 25-23. The top two teams from each of the four groups will advance to the main round, where they will be split into two four-team groups. Iran, which achieved its best result with a bronze-medal finish in 2014, ended last year's tournament in Bahrain in sixth place after a narrow 27-26 defeat to South Korea. Castillo's men will be looking to bounce back from a below-par run at November's Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, where Iran suffered defeats to Qatar (39-23) and the UAE (28-25) on either side of a 57-14 demolition of the Maldives, finishing third in the group and missing out on a

last-four spot. As if added motivation were needed, World Championship berths will be up for grabs in Kuwait, with the four semi-finalists securing qualification for the 2027 showpiece in Germany. The following is Iran's provisional 21-man squad:

Ali Rahimi, Milad Qalandari, Vahid Masoudi, Yassin Kabirianjou, Amirhossein Firouzbakht, Reza Ezzati, Shahab Sadeqzadeh, Younes Asari, Ali Heidarian, Rouhollah Adelkhani, Reza Shojaei, Alireza Dadvand, Alireza Pirzad, Mohammad Siavoshi, Arman Rahmani, Taha Shokouhipour, Mohammadreza Kazemi, Omid Enayatijou, Saber Heidari, Saeid Aliakbari, Omidreza Sarpoushi.

UAE Pro League:

Qayedi at the double as Al Nasr edges Majidi's Al Bataeh



alnasrclub.com

Sports Desk

Iranian international winger Mahdi Qayedi scored twice against his former coach Farhad Majidi to help Al Nasr beat 10-man Al Bataeh 3-2 in the UAE ADNOC Pro League on Sunday. Al Bataeh started the home game brightly, with Anatole Bertrand testing the Al Nasr goalkeeper twice in the opening 21 minutes, but the early pressure failed to produce a breakthrough. The match turned on its head in the 34th minute when Al Bataeh goalkeeper Ibrahim Essa Al Balooshi was shown a straight red card for fouling Qayedi as the forward raced clear on goal. The breakthrough arrived shortly after the restart, as Qayedi sprinted onto Luka Milivojevic's perfectly weighted pass and finished confidently to give Al Nasr the lead. The Al Bataeh showed real character and were rewarded in the 72nd minute when Bertrand

capitalised on a goalkeeping error to bring the hosts level. The response was immediate. Just 60 seconds later, Qayedi struck again, drilling a low effort from outside the area to put Al Nasr back in front. Majidi's men refused to go away and stunned the visitors once more as Bertrand produced a sensational bicycle kick from close range to make it 2-2. With the match heading towards a draw, Al Nasr found a decisive moment in the 90th minute as Malian Cheickna Doumbia timed his run to perfection, latched onto Moussa Ndiaye's through ball and finished calmly to complete a dramatic win. A fourth win in nine games saw the visitors jump to sixth in the table on 14 points — nine adrift of league leaders Al Ain. Meanwhile, a seventh defeat of the campaign left Al Bataeh struggling in 12th place of the 14-team standings with six points — two above the relegation zone.

Iranian Volleyball Super League:

Foolad routs Razin in straight sets to go top

Sports Desk

Defending champions Foolad Sirjan extended its perfect start to the Iranian Volleyball Super League season, demolishing Razin Polymer in straight sets (25-12, 25-16, 25-18) in Tehran on Sunday. A seventh successive win of the campaign saw Behoruz Ataei's side move back to the top of the league table with 20 points — one clear of second-placed Shahdab Yazd, which has won six of seven matches. The home defeat left Razin 10th in the 14-team stand-

ings with seven points. Elsewhere, Tabi'at Es-lamshahr defeated Mes Rafsanjan 3-0 (25-19, 25-23, 26-24) at home to climb to eighth in the table with seven points from three wins. The sixth defeat of the season kept the visitors bottom of the stand-ings with two points. Esteghlal Gonbad celebrated only its second win since returning to the Iranian top flight, beating San'atgaran Omid 3-1 (25-22, 31-29, 20-25, 25-19) at home to sit 12th with four points. San'atgaran remain seventh with 10 points from three victories.



Foolad Sirjan middle-blocker Mohammad Valizadeh (27) hits a spike during a 3-0 victory over Razin Polymer in the Iranian Volleyball Super League in Tehran, Iran, on December 21, 2025. [volleyball.ir](#)

Navidkia blames 'impulsive' Sepahan after Hazfi Cup exit

Sports Desk

Sepahan head coach Mohammad Navidkia blamed his side's "impulsive" performance after suffering a shock 3-1 home defeat to Khaybar in the Iranian Hazfi Cup last 16. Mohsen Sefidchoqaei gave Khaybar a fifth-minute lead at

Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium, only for his strike to be cancelled out 10 minutes later by in-form Mohammad Askari, who netted his seventh goal in 14 appearances across all competitions. Ali Khanzadi's header restored the visitors' advantage two minutes into the second half, before



RASOUL SHOJAEI/IRNA

Iranian international midfielder Omid Nourafkan was denied from the penalty spot by Khaybar goalkeeper Hossein Pourhamidi. Amirhossein Farsi came off the bench to double Khaybar's lead with 16 minutes remaining as Sepahan fell to its first defeat in 14 games in all competitions since a 2-1 home loss to Tractor in the Persian Gulf Pro League on September 21. It marked another impressive result for Mahdi Rahmati's Khaybar, which has already defeated Iranian top-flight heavyweights Tractor and Persepolis in the league this season. "We missed out on a precious trophy," Navidkia said after the game. "It was a thrilling match with numerous chances for both sides, but we were unlucky to concede twice at the worst possible moments — in the early stages of both halves." Navidkia pointed to his team's high-risk attacking approach and a loss of tactical cohesion as the main reasons for the defeat. The situation worsened in the second half following the forced substitution of Brazilian midfielder Ricardo Alves as a

precaution due to injury. "Alves' exit disrupted our mid-field discipline," he explained. "The team then became impulsive, desperately pushing for an equalizer and leaving vast spaces for Khaybar's counter-attacks." He also underlined the unforgiving nature of knockout football, where any defeat results in elimination regardless of the scoreline. "We played with excessive risk, which unfortunately left us vulnerable defensively." The club legend offered his full support to Nourafkan after the missed penalty, saying: "Omid is a quality player with exemplary discipline. Missing a penalty does not diminish his ability. He delivered a brilliant performance against Foolad last time out, and I am confident he will be a major asset for the team as the season progresses. "Had our penalty been converted, the dynamics of the game would have changed. However, I must accept that impulsive play and a lack of discipline at certain spells were the primary reasons for our cup exit. We must address these weaknesses promptly."

Restoration project to bring back Sa'di Tomb's historic charm

The restoration of the pools and green spaces at the Sa'di Tomb complex in Shiraz, including the tomb's famous fish pond, is now underway under the supervision of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage Organization, and part of the site's historic freshness is expected to return by the Persian New Year (Nowruz). According to IRNA, the water pools and ornamental trees of the garden have long provided a pleasant and refreshing atmosphere for visitors. However, for some time, the main courtyard pool has remained empty, the fish pond dry, and maintaining the surrounding greenery has become increasingly challenging. Currently, the provincial Cultural Heritage Organization has outlined two strategies to supply water to the complex: one is already in progress, while the other is at the stage of drafting a tripartite agreement. Sadeq Zare', Deputy Head of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, told IRNA that, after obtaining all necessary



● IRNA

permits from the Fars Regional Water Company, a deep well is currently being drilled. The well is expected to be operational by mid-March 2026, providing a reliable water source for irrigating the complex's green spaces. "The deep well is under construction and will ensure a steady water supply for the site for years to come," Zare'

said. While water from this well could also reach the fish pond, the organization emphasizes reviving the Sa'di Tomb's traditional qanat system. This restoration would not only refill the pond but also allow water to flow to downstream gardens, including Delgosha Garden. Regarding the site's water scarcity, the official explained that

a tripartite agreement is being negotiated between the Cultural Heritage Organization, the Municipality, and the private sector to restore the qanat of Sa'di Tomb. The agreement has been drafted and is currently under final review. As part of the project, the qanat will be dredged, and its collapsed and damaged walls re-

constructed. Since the fish pond historically draws water from this qanat, clearing and securing its entrance is expected to allow the pond to be refilled using traditional methods. The tripartite restoration agreement is in the final stages of editing and is set to be implemented next year. Zare' also noted that additional restoration plans for the Sa'di

Tomb include reconstructing and raising the north wall, renovating the main veranda, and preparing the courtyard for stone paving. Recognized as a national heritage site, the Sa'di Tomb complex remains one of the country's most visited cultural landmarks, particularly during the Nowruz holidays.

Emergency measures secure UNESCO-listed Gohar Riz Qanat



● alibabair

Iranica Desk

Emergency actions have been carried out to protect the Gohar Riz Qanat, a UNESCO World Heritage site located in Jupar, Kerman Province, and the water flow of the qanat has been restored to its original course following immediate interventions. Announcing the development, Farnaz Farrahi-Moqaddam, Deputy Head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Kerman Province, said that problems had emerged at the historic and globally registered Gohar Riz

Qanat following recent rainfall and flooding. She explained that the large volume of surface water generated by the floods, combined with improper water diversion, had caused subsidence in parts of the qanat and increased the risk of damage to this valuable heritage site. To prevent potential destruction, urgent and emergency operations were launched at the site, according to chn.ir. She added that, fortunately, the qanat's water flow has now returned to its main channel and the risk of possible damage has been brought under control.

Farrahi-Moqaddam noted that these measures have produced positive results, emphasizing that the problem stemmed from the improper guidance of seasonal rivers as they crossed over the qanat. She pointed out that warnings and recommendations to correct the watercourse had previously been issued on several occasions by the former site manager. Stressing the sensitivity of the current situation following the recent floods, she said that an emergency meeting involving relevant authorities will be held to make decisions on more serious and sustainable measures

aimed at addressing the challenges and stabilizing the condition of the qanat. She also underscored that the protection and preservation of historic and globally registered qanats, as an important part of the country's water heritage, require proper management of surface water routes, along with coordination and cooperation among relevant institutions. The Gohar Riz Qanat is an active qanat system in Kerman Province. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List at the organization's 40th session in 2016.

Reading Room

Recognizing cultural heritage; celebrating unity across borders

By Mohammad Hashemi
Guest contributor

When Tajikistan's nomination of samanek — a traditional sweet wheat paste — was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on December 10, 2025, the announcement reverberated across the broader Persianate world. The nomination, formally titled "Culture of Samanak cooking," was adopted during the 20th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in New Delhi, marking a moment of cultural recognition for a practice shared across several neighboring societies. In Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, samanek (or sumanak) is familiar not as a uniquely national emblem but as a regional tradition rooted in the ritual of spring, wheat cultivation, and collective preparation.

Persian language coverage of the registration largely highlighted this shared continuity rather than framing it as a competitive claim, underlining the practice's deep roots across borders. In Tehran, that shared tradition is visible far from ceremonial occasions. In specialty food shops across the city — notably in the historic Tajrish Bazaar in northern Tehran, a bustling hub where young and old alike gather — many visitors come specifically to purchase samanek, while others browse stalls for a variety of goods or simply enjoy the lively atmosphere. Samanek is now offered year-round in glass jars of varying sizes, alongside freshly baked traditional cookies. No longer confined to the weeks surrounding Nowruz, the dish attracts customers for its flavor, natural sweetness, or simply out of habit. What was once primarily tied to ritual has become a familiar and en-

during presence in the urban food landscape. This evolution is not unique to Iran. In Tajikistan and Afghanistan, gatherings to prepare samanek remain closely tied to communal spring celebrations, yet the dish is also made and shared outside those periods. While preparation methods vary across the region, the symbolism of renewal, abundance, and shared effort remains strikingly similar. Questions of cultural "ownership" often accompany heritage recognition, but regional experience offers a different perspective. Nowruz itself — listed as a multinational element on UNESCO's intangible heritage lists — demonstrates that shared traditions can be acknowledged cooperatively. In response to the samanek registration, Persian commentary framed the decision in this spirit, presenting it as a reminder of long-standing cultural affinity rather than a



● IRNA

source of division. Beyond its symbolic value, samanek also makes a modest contribution to everyday livelihoods. In Tehran and across the country alike, some of the samanek sold in shops comes from small workshops and home kitchens, with production remaining limited and largely informal. Once prepared primarily for Nowruz,

it is now made throughout the year, providing a steady — if restrained — source of income for those involved. In contexts where formal employment opportunities are limited, home-based food preparation continues to support urban households, allowing traditional foods like samanek to adapt to contemporary consumption without

losing their cultural character. Heritage recognition brings visibility, but it does not reshape daily practice; the making and selling of samanek remains local, small-scale, and rooted in lived experience. Its endurance lies in this balance: it crosses borders without erasing difference, supports small livelihoods without becoming industrialized, and remains present long after spring celebrations have passed. From Tehran to Dushanbe and Kabul, communities in Iran, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan share not only similar preparation methods but also the same symbolic meaning — renewal, patience, and celebration. These culinary traditions, passed down through generations, reflect a common heritage that transcends borders, highlighting the enduring bonds among Persian-speaking societies and offering a quieter narrative in a region often described through political divisions.

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10m Persian historic manuscripts from India entrusted to Iranian science institute

Arts & Culture Desk

The Islamic World Science and Technology Citation and Monitoring Institute (ISC) in Shiraz has acquired a vast collection of 10 million Persian-language manuscripts collected over nearly five decades in India by the Iranian Noor International Microfilm Center (NIMC). The manuscripts, covering Iranian history, culture, and Islamic heritage, will be digitized and made accessible to scholars across Iran and the broader Islamic world, ISC official website reported. At a ceremony at ISC headquarters, Mohammad Mehdi Alavianmehr, ISC director, described the manuscripts as a critical resource for expanding the institute's databases. "Manuscripts collected from Iran and other countries are among the sources that strengthen ISC's information networks," he said, highlighting centuries of Iranian cultural presence in India. "For roughly 800 years, Persian served as India's scientific and literary language, leaving behind invaluable documents that now form part of this archive." The manuscripts, preserved on microfiches both digitally and physically,

were gathered by NIMC founder Mehdi Khajehpiri. Alavianmehr said ISC will index and code the collection, allowing researchers to search and retrieve information efficiently. He called the initiative a cornerstone of Iran's cultural heritage and emphasized the institute's leadership in digital humanities, urging major universities to collaborate in this field. Khajehpiri, reflecting on more than 40 years of archival work in India, noted the urgency of preservation. "If we cannot protect existing manuscripts today, future generations will judge us poorly tomorrow," he said. He described manuscripts stored for centuries in Telangana archives in fragile conditions, exposed to insects and vermin. The collection includes manuscripts dating back over 700 years. Approximately 100,000 works have been digitized after the originals ceased to exist physically. Khajehpiri recounted challenges in accessing restricted repositories, including a monastery library in India containing 7,000 manuscripts, which required persistent negotiation before digitization was allowed. The Noor Microfilm Center's resto-



Mohammad Mehdi Alavianmehr (R), director of the Islamic World Science and Technology Citation and Monitoring Institute (ISC) in Shiraz, and Mehdi Khajehpiri, founder of Noor International Microfilm Center (NIMC), sign a cooperation agreement on December 21, 2025 to host, digitize, and provide researcher access to a vast archive of historical manuscripts and documents from India.

● isc.ac

ration methods are considered globally unique. Under the guidance of Iran's Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the center restored 80,000 manuscripts at the Astan Quds Razavi shrine. The collection transferred to ISC is expected to illuminate previously unknown historical episodes, including Iran's ownership of the Persian Gulf, international trade relations, and political diplomacy during the Qajar era. These manuscripts provide missing links in Iran's history," Khajehpiri said. "They offer a foundation for new historical research and have the potential to position Iran as a global hub for Islamic written heritage." Established in 2008 under Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, ISC serves the Islamic world across



five regions, including Southeast Asia, the Arab states, non-Arab Africa, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and other Islamic countries in West Asia, Europe, and South America. The institute monitors scholarly output, ranks universities, produces scientific and technology reports, and organizes capacity-building workshops to strengthen research networks among

Islamic countries. The memorandum of understanding signed between ISC and NIMC formalizes the transfer, enabling the digital archiving, systematic cataloging, and scholarly dissemination of a collection that includes Persian, Arabic, and other regional language manuscripts in religious, literary, artistic, and scientific domains.

Tehran's 'Palimento' exhibition mapping memory through layered media



Arts & Culture Desk

A multimedia exhibition titled 'Palimento,' by Iranian painter and new-media artist Behdad Najafi Asadollahi, is underway at Tehran's Nian Gallery, showcasing more than 40 works curated by Rosa Matinfar of the Matin Art Platform. The exhibition frames newspapers not as vehicles of breaking news but as historical media, transforming printed pages into visual archives on which new narratives are layered, Iran Daily reported. The show opened on December 19 and runs for 10 days through December 29, excluding Saturdays. Developed over four years, the project integrates painting, installation and participatory art to examine how meaning forms and mutates amid political messaging, temporal distance and emotional response. 'Palimento' draws on two related concepts. Palimpsest refers to a layered manuscript in which earlier texts persist beneath later writ-

ing. Pentimento, a term in painting, describes the resurfacing of an artist's original decisions as pigments age. Together, the ideas advance a core premise: No image or narrative begins anew. Every gesture is built upon what already exists. In Najafi Asadollahi's works, the base layer is the formal media narrative. Headlines, mastheads and page structures are partially concealed by abstract paint, yet remain visible as residual signals beneath the surface. The visual tension between the suppressed text and the expressive overlay creates a dialogue between asserted fact and subjective interpretation. Language that once claimed authority is muted, though never erased. The project's conceptual framework is rooted in palimpsest theory as developed in intertextual studies, where meaning accumulates through layering rather than replacement. Each work stages a confrontation between two registers: The archival language of reportage and a painterly response shaped by affect and reflection. The coexistence of these layers destabilizes the

notion of a single, fixed truth. This approach culminates in an interactive installation titled 'The Rewriting Wall,' where visitors move beyond passive viewing to active participation. On a wall covered with newspapers, audiences add lines, symbols and words, effectively rewriting the surface. The act mirrors pentimento in real time, as new inscriptions overlay older ones without fully concealing them, turning viewers into contributors. By obscuring text, the works introduce a deliberate silence. That silence, however, is dense rather than empty, filled with traces of suppressed narratives. The participatory installation converts this silence into personal expression, suggesting that meaning in a media-saturated environment emerges through engagement rather than transmission. 'Palimento' presents time, memory and media as interwoven strata, where every mark signals both what has been and what continues to be written.

'Shared Heritage, Everlasting Ties' series opens with Iran-Kazakhstan cultural night

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran inaugurated its 'Shared Heritage, Everlasting Ties' cultural series on Monday with a night celebrating ties with Kazakhstan at the Niavaran Cultural-Historical Complex, the Center for International Affairs and Public Diplomacy of Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said. Organized in partnership with the Kazakh Embassy in Tehran, the event highlighted opportunities for collaboration in heritage preservation, tourism, handicrafts, and joint cultural

projects, IRNA reported. The program featured Kazakhstan's Serpr ensemble performing traditional music alongside an Iranian performance led by Khorasan musician Mor-teza Goudarzi. Guests experienced Kazakh culture through a yurt installation, photography and handicrafts exhibition, and a tasting of traditional dishes from both nations. Diplomats and cultural representatives from multiple countries attended, participating in discussions on tourism trends, heritage exchanges, and potential collaborative initiatives.



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Sirjan Jahan Steel Company is pleased to announce the sale and export of 20,000 tons **DIRECT REDUCTED 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, 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, January 05, 2026.**

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