

Minister outlines
people-centered heritage
policy in Semnan

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Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd (3rd L) attends a trilateral meeting with delegations headed by her counterparts from Turkey and Uzbekistan in Istanbul, Turkey on February 12, 2026.

MEHR

Iran-US deal carries
strategic weight,
to benefit entire region



By Mostafa Alaei
Former diplomat & foreign
policy analyst

O P I N I O N

Given Donald Trump's unpredictability, the contours of his policymaking and a range of other variables, offering a precise forecast of the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the United States is no simple task. Even so, there are indications that this round differs in important ways from earlier efforts. In previous negotiations, the US ultimately turned to military action in June, seeking to deliver a decisive blow. At that time, Washington had neither tested a direct military strike on Iran nor had domestic unrest at its disposal aimed at what it described as regime change. In the current talks, it has both experiences behind it.

This time, however, Washington come back to the table after two clear setbacks. The first emerged from the 12-day war, when it became apparent that even a forceful military campaign, carried out with surprise and intensity, failed to secure its stated objectives. Damage was inflicted, but the broader goals that had been outlined were not realized. The second setback followed attempts to capitalize on unrest inside Iran. Protests rooted in legitimate demands over economic grievances were seen by Washington as an opportunity. Efforts were made to leverage that moment, including through armed elements, yet it became clear that this path, too, would not deliver the desired outcome.

Those two failed experiences for Israel and the United States in dealing with Iran suggest that the current negotiations are not simply a rerun of the past. It is therefore plausible that Trump may now contemplate offering concessions, or at least to entertain in his own calculations the need to place some on the table. This calculation unfolds against the backdrop of a massive US military deployment in the Persian Gulf, aimed at signaling deterrence and applying pressure. The show of force is unmistakable, yet this round of negotiations appears, in several respects, distinct from those that preceded it.

The strategic weight of these talks is inseparable from the broader regional context, particularly the scale of the US military buildup in the Persian Gulf and Iran's stated posture of deterrence. Tehran has made clear that if war breaks out, it will respond forcefully and that any such conflict would inevitably spill over across the region.

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Top defense official reaffirms Iranian missiles not up for negotiation

Iraqi FM says opposes use of force against Iran

International Desk

Iran's Secretary of Defense Council Ali Shamkhani said on Friday the country's missiles were a "red line" and non-negotiable amid a fresh round of talks with the United States on Tehran's nuclear program. The negotiations began on February 6 in Oman to resolve a decades-long dispute which has already caused a brief military conflict between the two countries. Washington has long sought to extend talks to cover Iran's missile program. Iran has said it is prepared to discuss curbs on its nuclear program in return for the lifting of sanctions, but has repeatedly ruled out linking the issue to other issues including missiles. "Our missile systems are a red line and not up for negotiation," Shamkhani told Al Jazeera as reports suggest that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Ne-

tanyahu had in a Wednesday meeting with US President Donald Trump to include Iranian missiles into terms of a probable deal. "There was nothing definitive reached other than I insisted that negotiations with Iran continue to see whether or not a Deal can be consummated," Trump wrote in a post on Truth Social after meeting with Netanyahu. "If it can, I let the Prime Minister (Netanyahu) know that will be a preference. If it cannot, we will just have to see what the outcome will be." In his online post, Trump suggested that he was restraining Netanyahu but also said that further strikes could be a result if Iran does not agree to a new nuclear deal. Shamkhani in his interview with Al Jazeera also warned that Iran would deliver a "strong, decisive, and appropriate" response to any aggression.

He noted that Tehran was ready for any scenario. "Our military readiness is high. The cost of any miscalculation by any party will be significant." The Iranian official added that diplomacy could succeed under fair conditions. "If negotiations are realistic and free of excessive demands, they can move in a positive direction and serve the interests of all parties." Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has described the first round of the talks as a "good start," adding that the talks are limited strictly to the nuclear file. Iranian officials say their main demand in Muscat is the effective and verifiable lifting of economic and financial sanctions. Tehran insists that any deal without tangible economic benefit would be meaningless. It also maintains that uranium enrichment on Iranian soil is a legal right and a non-negotiable principle.



Ali Shamkhani
IRNA

Iraqi opposition

Meanwhile, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said on Friday that Baghdad opposed the use of force against Iran. "We are not mediating between

Iran and America. But in any case, negotiations are under way and we hope the process of talks in Oman has gone well so far," Hussein said on the sidelines of the Munich Security

Conference. "We are following the entire process. We support dialogue and negotiation. And of course we oppose any use of force against Iran," he added.

Iran puts 'Jam-e Jam 1' satellite into orbit

Iran's national broadcaster successfully launched its first dedicated geostationary satellite "Jam-e Jam 1", internationally registered as "Iran DBS", marking a strategic step toward strengthening the country's space-based media infrastructure. The satellite, owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), was launched into space from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. Jam-e Jam 1 was placed into orbit minutes after liftoff aboard a Proton-M carrier rocket, alongside a Russian meteorological satellite, Press TV reported. According to IRIB's Media Development and Technology Department, Jam-e Jam 1 represents the first technical and operational step toward implementing next-generation interactive radio and television broadcasting technology.



The satellite has been designed to transmit interactive audio and video signals to ground-based public broadcasting stations, laying the groundwork for interactive mass broadcasting services. Based on the scheduled plan, Jam-e Jam 1 will be transferred and stabilized at its final orbital position at 34 degrees East within less than three weeks. The designated orbital slot is expected to provide optimal coverage for IRIB's communications requirements. Officials stressed that Jam-e Jam 1 is application-oriented in na-

ture. Unlike direct-to-home (DTH) broadcasting satellites designed for household receivers, signals from this satellite require professional and specialized equipment and cannot be received through ordinary home satellite receivers. The project guarantees the necessary communications framework for consolidating interactive broadcasting technology within the national broadcaster and opens what officials described as a new chapter in the technical independence of Iran's national media in the space-based domain. Iran first entered the global space arena in February 2009 with the launch of its domestically produced Omid (Hope) satellite aboard a Safir rocket. Since then, Iran has expanded its civilian space program and is now considered among the world's top countries capable of developing and launching satellites.

Pezeshkian: Enemies exploit national crises to upend unity

International Desk

The Iranian president described the national unity as the first step to overcome the crises facing the country, saying that enemies are trying to exploit the country's problems to sow discord between the people and authorities.

Masoud Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with intellectuals, political, social, and cultural figures in the northern province of Golestan on Thursday. Referring to numerous problems in the country including electricity shortage, water crisis, environmental issues, and inflation, Pezeshkian said that problems can be resolved only through unity. Deepening disagreements pushes society toward weakness and collapse, the president warned. He said that foreign powers, including the United States and Israel, exploit Iran's challenges without genuine concern for the country's welfare. "It is undeniable that Israel and the US take advantage of our country's situation. They have done nothing but create problems for us. Their hearts are not with Iran," Pezeshkian underlined. Referring to the recent riots across the country, Pezeshkian added, "During the recent incidents, Trump and Netanyahu beat the drum of protests. Did they intend to solve our nation's problems? Has anyone other than them caused issues for us? They have blocked all our paths, frozen our transactions, and obstructed our



president.ir

work, while telling some inside the country that they want to 'save' us." On January 8 and 9, protests sparked by economic grievances turned into unruly scenes of mayhem and destruction. Armed groups infiltrated the demonstrations, leading to damage to shops, government buildings and public facilities, as well as casualties among civilians and security forces. A total of 3,117 people lost their lives during the riots, including 2,427 innocent civilians and security personnel. "A great wound has been created. We must repair and heal it with unity and cohesion, not deepen it with division and discord, which only increases the country's problems," Pezeshkian said. He also highlighted the longstanding pressure Iran has faced, asserting that those who themselves commit genocide "speak of humanity and human rights, and accuse us of massacre and plunder." He noted that since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, "all kinds of pressures and conspiracies have been applied to prevent us from serving the people properly."

Iran-US deal carries ...

As a result, regional states view a confrontation between Iran and the United States as a serious and immediate threat. For Persian Gulf countries, a large-scale conflict would put both their economic interests and global standing at risk. Should the United States carry out major strikes against Iran, the fallout would not be confined to Iran alone. The reverberations would extend to the Persian Gulf states and potentially beyond. The possibility that a war could quickly become regional has prompted governments to step up efforts to prevent it. Persian Gulf states and other Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt, along with actors beyond the region, are working in earnest to avert a military clash between Tehran and Washington. From a strategic standpoint, this lends added importance to the current negotiations. US policymakers may conclude that reaching some form of agreement is necessary. Otherwise, a serious

divergence could emerge between American interests and those of regional partners. Unlike in the past, US objectives might not enjoy full regional backing if they are seen to jeopardize local interests. For these reasons, an agreement at this juncture would carry strategic significance. A deal would serve the interests of regional states, Iran and the United States alike. The prospects for achieving such an understanding appear stronger in this round. Diplomacy, after all, is rarely straightforward. It is a layered and intricate process, shaped by multiple tools, tactics and formulations. Publicly declared positions are a routine feature of international negotiations and, on their own, do not predetermine the outcome. History offers ample evidence that even after decades of entrenched disagreement, negotiators can eventually craft language that preserves main positions while narrowing gaps through careful wording and, at times, constructive ambiguity. From that vantage point, there is

greater room now than before for cautious optimism about the diplomatic track. Pressure from hawkish factions has long weighed on US administrations. This time, however, Trump appears to face a set of challenges that encourage greater caution. The accumulation of political and strategic pressures surrounding him has reduced his room to align fully with pro-Israel and warmonger Republican lobbies as in previous instances. With elections approaching, the political outlook remains uncertain. A defeat would expose him to the deeply unwelcome prospect of impeachment and intensified domestic pressure. At the same time, regional states are unlikely to lend support if their own interests are put at risk. There are additional concerns that weigh on the current administration. Taken together, these factors suggest that lobbying forces may not exercise the same degree of influence as before. In that sense, the present circumstances leave room for guarded hope.



Minster offers Islamic transport control hub, financial fund at OIC meeting

Trilateral talks highlight East-West corridor, transit cooperation



Iran's Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd (c) addresses the Second Conference of Transport Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Istanbul on February 12, 2026.
● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd proposed establishing an "Islamic Joint Transport Operations Room" and an "Islamic Transport Financial Fund" at the Second Conference of Transport Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Istanbul on Thursday. Sadeh Malvajerd also suggested forming three specialized working groups on logistics, legal and

institutional coordination, and transport digitalization. "The Islamic Republic of Iran, taking advantage of the present conference, proposes the creation of three specialized working groups under the topics of logistics, legal and institutional coordination, and transport digitalization for experience exchanges within the capacity of six main institutions affiliated with the OIC, so that a sustainable mechanism is created for following up on this conference's decisions and our interac-

tions are not limited to periodic meetings, but transform into a continuous and result-oriented process," the minister said, IRNA reported. "To implement joint action on these concerns, I propose two operational measures," she added. "The first is the establishment of an 'Islamic Joint Transport Operations Room' to coordinate infrastructure projects, create a unified cargo-tracking system and reduce overlapping permits. The second is the creation of an 'Islamic

Transport Financial Fund' to facilitate joint investment and financing for strategic projects through innovative approaches, including use of the Islamic Development Bank's capacity and issuance of Islamic financial instruments such as infrastructure sukuk, paving the way for implementation of strategic transit corridors." Sadeh Malvajerd highlighted Iran's strategic position in regional transit, saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its Eurasian crossroads position and by imple-

menting major projects such as connecting Chabahar port to the Central Asian rail network and developing the East-West transit corridor from the Bazargan border to Shalamcheh, extends a hand of cooperation toward all Islamic countries." Rail access to Chabahar Port, described as the shortest route for regional countries to international waters, is being completed rapidly and is scheduled to finish in the coming months, increasing capacity from 8.5 million tons to more than 30 million tons. She also reported progress on the Marand-Cheshmeh Soraya railway, "Construction of the strategic Marand-Cheshmeh Soraya railway, which connects Iran's rail network to Turkey's rail network, is also being seriously pursued so that the southern branch of the East-West corridor becomes a fully rail-based transit route and fast and low-cost transfer of all types of cargo among the Islamic nation is guaranteed with minimum stops and costs." During a trilateral meeting in Istanbul with Turkey's transport minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu and Uzbekistan's transport minister Ilhom Makhkamov, participants emphasized strengthening the East-West corridor and removing transit barriers, focusing on expanding transport cooperation and facilitating regional trade. Uraloglu said, "Digitalization of border and commercial procedures, reduction of parallel permits, and creation of coordinated

and fast procedures should be placed at the priority of joint programs." The Uzbek minister, referring to comparative statistics on the middle and southern routes of the East-West corridor, described the joint corridor of Iran, Turkey and Uzbekistan as one of the region's most important trade routes and stressed facilitating customs and border procedures as well as strengthening private-sector participation. **Uzbek traffic up 117%** In a separate bilateral meeting with his Uzbek counterpart, Sadeh Malvajerd reported 117% growth in Uzbek fleet traffic to Iran and 18% growth in Iranian fleet traffic to Uzbekistan in 2025 following preparation of a road-map and removal of reciprocal \$400 tolls. The two sides reviewed road and rail transport issues and stressed the need for continued follow-up to expand cooperation. Sadeh Malvajerd also held separate talks with her Turkish counterpart in Istanbul, where discussions covered increasing capacity at shared borders, a new rail link at the Cheshmeh Soraya-Aralik crossing to complete the East-West rail route, expanding roll-on/roll-off capacity on Lake Van, and relaunching Tehran-Ankara and Tehran-Istanbul train services. Turkey's transport minister expressed readiness to participate in a ministerial meeting of Islamic transport countries to advance cooperation across rail, road and air sectors.

President says 70,000 MW power contracts signed to fix energy imbalance

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian announced Thursday that Iran has signed power generation contracts totaling 70,000 megawatts as the government's top priority to resolve the country's energy imbalance, with a target capacity exceeding 120,000 megawatts. Speaking after meetings with producers and investors in the northern province of Golestan, Pezeshkian stated that sustainable energy supply for the production sector sits at the top of the government's urgent agenda and is being pursued rapidly. He recalled that upon the administration's commencement in July 2024, the nation faced an electricity deficit of approximately

20,000 to 23,000 megawatts, president.ir quoted him as saying. "Beyond production capacity shortages, we also confronted challenges in supplying fuel to existing power plants," Pezeshkian said. "This year, a considerable portion of power plant fuel deficits has been compensated, while renewable energy development proceeds at an unprecedented pace." The president outlined future plans to electrify household consumption and allocate gas in a targeted manner to industries with high added value to optimize energy resource management. He affirmed the government's determination to eliminate energy imbalance through precise planning and practical measures both in Golestan and

nationwide, enabling producers to operate without concern and preventing citizens from facing periodic restrictions. Mohsen Tarzatab, deputy energy minister, told the Mehr news agency on Friday that nearly 3,000 megawatts of renewable power plants have been constructed under the Pezeshkian administration, with more than half developed through direct private sector investment and the remainder through participation of the National Development Fund. During his one-day visit to Golestan, Pezeshkian said resources for provincial development have been allocated through government credits, bank facilities and private investment, primarily directed toward roads, water,

power, agriculture, education and healthcare infrastructure. Projects were also inaugurated or approved during sessions with provincial producers, industrialists, exporters and traders. Economic actors raised issues including liquidity constraints, customs obstacles and administrative procedures, with officials emphasizing the need to prevent disruption to production, exports and activities of farmers and guilds, he said. Addressing executable deci-



President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during the concluding session of the government's provincial tour to Golestan Province, on February 12, 2026.
● president.ir

sion-making, Pezeshkian noted the accumulation of unfinished projects from past decades and stated, "One serious management flaw in previous years was approving projects lacking finan-

cial and executive backing, some remaining incomplete after 20 or 30 years. The government's approach is to accept no resolution unless its resources and execution capability are secured."

IRICA: Non-oil exports hit \$86b under sitting administration

Economy Desk

The Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) reported that non-oil exports reached 236 million tons valued at \$86 billion during President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration, which commenced in July 2024, according to an official report on the government's foreign trade performance. The report, cited by the Islamic Republic News



Agency (IRNA), detailed the administration's foreign trade activities since taking office. During the period, Iran imported 60 million tons of various goods valued at \$102 billion.

The customs authority also reported that more than 31 million tons of goods transited through Iran's territory during the same timeframe, reflecting the country's role in regional trade corridors. The figures encompass all non-oil export categories and represent the government's trade performance from the start of the Pezeshkian administration through the current reporting period.

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Public Relations of Tabriz Petrochemical Company (Public Stock)

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Trump's \$1.5 trillion 'Dream Military'

By William J. Astore and Tom Engelhardt

OPINION

What constitutes national security and how is it best achieved? Does massive military spending really make a country more secure, and what perils to democracy and liberty are posed by vast military establishments? Questions like those are rarely addressed in honest ways these days in America. Instead, the Trump administration favors preparations for war and more war, fueled by potentially enormous increases in military spending that are dishonestly framed as "recapitalizations" of America's security and safety. Such framing makes Pete Hegseth, America's self-styled "secretary of war," seem almost refreshing in his embrace of a warrior ethos. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham is another "warrior" who cheers for conflict, whether with Venezuela, Iran, or even — yes! — Russia. Such macho men revel in what they believe is this country's divine mission to dominate the world. Tragically, at the moment, unapologetic warmongers like Hegseth and Graham are winning the political and cultural battle here in America.

Of course, US warmongering is anything but new, as is a belief in global dominance through high military spending. Way back in 1983, as a college student, I worked on a project that critiqued President Ronald Reagan's "defense" buildup and his embrace of pie-in-the-sky concepts like the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), better known as "Star Wars." Never did I imagine that, more than 40 years later, another Republican president would again come to embrace SDI (freshly rebranded as "Golden Dome") and ever-more massive military spending, especially since the Soviet Union, America's superpower rival in Reagan's time, ceased to exist 35 years ago. Amazingly, Trump even wants to bring back naval battleships, as Reagan briefly did (though he didn't have the temerity to call for a new class of ships to be named after himself). It'll be a "golden fleet," says Trump. What gives? For much of my life, I've tried to answer that very question. Soon after retiring from the US Air Force, I started writing for TomDispatch, penning my first article there in 2007, asking Americans to save the military from itself and especially from its "surge" illusions in the Iraq War. Tom Engelhardt and I, as well as Andrew Bacevich, Michael Klare, and Bill Hartung, among others, have spilled much ink (symbolically speaking in this online era) at TomDispatch urging that America's military-industrial complex be reined in and reformed. Trump's recent advocacy of a "dream military" with a proposed budget of \$1.5 trillion in 2027 (half a trillion dollars larger than the present Pentagon budget) was backed by places like the editorial board of the Washington Post, which just shows how frustratingly ineffectual our efforts have been. How discouraging, and again, what gives?

Sometimes (probably too often), I seek sanctuary from the hell we're living through in glib phrases that mask my despair. So, I'll write something like: America isn't a shining city on a hill, it's a bristling fortress in a valley of death; or, At the Pentagon, nothing succeeds like failure, a reference to eight failed audits in a row (part of a 30-year pattern of financial finagling) that accompanied disastrous wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Such phrases, no matter how clever I thought they were, made absolutely no impression when it came to slowing the growth of militarism in America. In essence, I've been bringing the online equivalent of a fountain pen to a gun fight, which has proved to be anything but a recipe for success.

In America, nothing — and I mean

nothing! — seems capable of reversing massive military spending and incessant warfare. President Ronald Reagan, readers of a certain (advanced) age may recall, was nicknamed the "Teflon president" because scandals just didn't seem to stick to him (at least until the Iran-Contra affair proved tough to shed). Yet history's best candidate for Teflon "no-stick" status was never Reagan or any other president. It was and remains the US warfare state, headquartered on the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. And give the sclerotic bureaucracy of that warfare state full credit. Even as the Pentagon has moved from failure to failure in warfighting, its war budgets have continued to soar and then soar some more.

all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

"We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together."



US President Donald Trump speaks at a rally for American troops at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, with service members in the background and a banner reading "Peace Through Strength" during his visit to the Persian Gulf base on May 15, 2025.

ANI

Forgive the repetition, but what gives? When is our long, national nightmare of embracing war and (wildly overpriced) weaponry going to end? Obviously, not anytime soon. Even the Democrats, supposedly the "resistance" to President Trump, boast openly of their support for what passes for military lethality (or at least overpriced weaponry), while Democratic members of Congress line up for their share of war-driven pork. To cite a cri de coeur from the 1950s, have they no sense of decency?

Shameless embrace of forever war and its spoils

I'm just an aging, retired Air Force lieutenant colonel. Who cares what I think? But America should still care about the words of Dwight D. Eisenhower, also known as Ike, the victorious five-star general of D-Day in 1944 and beyond, and this country's president from 1953 to 1961. Ike was famously the first significant figure to warn Americans about the then-developing military-industrial complex (MIC) in his farewell address to the nation. Yet, even then, his words were largely ignored. Recently, I reread Ike's warning, perhaps for the 100th time and was struck yet again by the way he highlighted the spiritual dimension of the challenge that is, all too sadly, still facing us.

In case you've forgotten them (or never read them), here are Ike's words from that televised address in January 1961, when he put the phrase "the military-industrial complex" in our language:

"This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence — economic, political, even spiritual — is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources, and livelihood are

Those were the prescient words of the most senior military man of his era, a true citizen-soldier and president, and more than six decades later, we should and must act on them if we have any hope left of preserving "our liberties and democratic processes."

Again, wise words, yet our leaders have seldom heeded them. Since 1961, the "disastrous rise of misplaced power" when it comes to the MIC has infected our culture, our economy, even — to steal a term from the era of the disastrous American war in Vietnam — our hearts and minds. Indeed, despite the way the MIC failed so spectacularly to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese, the Afghans, the Iraqis, and other embattled peoples across the globe in various misbegotten and mendacious wars, it did succeed spectacularly over the years in winning the hearts and minds of those who make the final decisions in the US government.

In an astonishing paradox, a spend-thrift military establishment that almost never wins anything, while consistently evading accountability for its losses, has by now captured almost untrammelled authority within our land. It defies logic, but logic never was this country's strong suit. In fact, only recently, we reached a point of almost ultimate illogic when America's bully-boy commander-in-chief insisted that a Pentagon budget already bloated with cash needs an extra \$500 billion. That, of course, would bring it to about \$1.5 trillion annually. Apologies to my Navy friends but even drunken sailors would be challenged to spend that mountain of money.

In short, no matter what it does, the Pentagon, America's prodigal son, never gets punished. It simply gets more. More, More, More!

Not only is such colossal military spending bad for this country, but it's also bad for the military itself, which, after all, didn't ask for Trump's pro-

posed \$500 billion raise. America's prodigal son was relatively content with a trillion dollars in yearly spending. In fact, the president's suggested increase in the Pentagon budget isn't just reckless; it may well wreck not just what's left of our democracy, but the military, too.

Like any massive institution, the Pentagon always wants more: more troops, more weapons, more power, invariably justified by inflating (or simply creating) threats to this country. Yet, clarity of thought, not to speak of creativity, rarely derives from excess. Lean times make for better thinking, fat times make for little thought at all.

Not long ago, Trump occasionally talked sense by railing on the campaign

Ike warned us about the "disastrous rise of misplaced power" if we failed to challenge it back in 1961. Recall that he also warned us that the MIC could change the very structure of our society, making America far less democratic and also far less free. And most subtly, he warned us that it might also weaken America spiritually.

What did he mean by that? To reference a speech Ike made in 1953, he warned then that we could end up hanging ourselves from a cross of iron. He warned that we could become captives of militarism and war, avid believers in spending the sweat of our laborers, the genius of our scientists, and the blood of our youth, pursuing military dominance globally, while losing our democratic beliefs and liberties at home in the process. And that, it seems to me, is exactly what did indeed happen. We the people were seduced, silenced, or sidetracked via slogans like "support our troops" or with over-the-top patriotic displays like military parades, no matter that they represented something distinctly less than triumphant in their moment.

And it never ends, does it? Americans in various polls today indicate that they don't want a war against either Venezuela or Iran, but our opinions simply aren't heeded. Increasingly, we live in a "might makes right" country, even as military might has so regularly made for wrong since 1945.

And what in the world is to be done? Many things, but most fundamentally it's time as a society to perform an "about-face," followed by a march in double-time away from permanent war and toward peace. And that, in turn, must lead to major reductions in Pentagon spending. The best and only way to tackle the inexorable growth of the blob is to stop feeding it money — and stop worshipping it as well. Instead of a \$500 billion increase, Congress should insist on a \$500 billion decrease in Pentagon spending. Our task should be to force the military-industrial complex to think, improvise, become leaner, and focus on how most effectively to protect and defend America and our ideals, rather than fostering the imperial dreams of the wannabe warlords among us.

Trump's current approach of further engorging the imperial blob is the stuff of national nightmares, not faintly a recipe for American greatness. It is, in fact, a sure guarantee of further decline and eventual collapse, not only economically and politically but spiritually as well, exactly as Ike warned in 1961. More wars and weapons simply will not make America great (again). How could they when, as Civil War General William T. Sherman so famously observed, war is "all hell"?

Americans, we must act to cut the war budget, shrink the empire, embrace diplomacy, and work for peace. Sadly, however, the blob has seemingly become our master, a well-nigh unstoppable force. Aren't you tired yet of being its slave?

On the 250th anniversary of America's founding, which was predicated on resistance to empire and military rule, it should be considered deeply tragic that this country has met the enemy — and he is indeed us. Here the words of Ike provide another teachable moment. Only Americans can truly hurt America, he once said. To which I'd add this corollary: Only Americans can truly save America.

As we celebrate our nation's birthday this July 4th, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could save this deeply disturbed country by putting war and empire firmly in the rearview mirror? A tall task for sure, but so, too, was declaring independence from the mighty British Empire in 1776.

The article was first published in Counter Currents.

Taking on the MICIMATTSHG, or blob

Ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern coined a useful acronym from the classic military-industrial complex, or MIC. He came up with MICIMATT (the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-Media-Academia-Think-Tank complex) to highlight its blob-like growth. And it's true that Congress and the rest are all deeply implicated in the blob. To which I'd add an "S" for the sporting world, an "H" for Hollywood, and a "G" for the gaming sector, all of which are implicated in, influenced by (as well as influencing), and often subservient to Ike's old MIC. So, what we now have is the MICIMATTSHG. Recall that

Trump's Board of Peace is a dystopia in motion



by Julia Norman
Political scientist

OPINION

While the sheer pomposity, Trumpian megalomania, and painfully paradoxical context surrounding the so-called "Board of Peace" (BoP) might tempt some to dismiss it as mere spectacle or farce, its criminal, inhumane, and hegemonic nature makes it far too dangerous to ignore.

Last week, Trump and his new, thugish boys' club of heads of state publicly celebrated the launch of the Board at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Its hypocrisy was inadvertently underscored by Elon Musk – Trump's on-again, off-again ally – when he quipped onstage that one might call it the Board of "p-i-e-c-e," a venture devoted to claiming "a little piece of Greenland, a little piece of Venezuela," to which his interviewer, Larry Fink, billionaire CEO of BlackRock, responded with cheer: "We got one." Only a room filled with the world's tech and business elite could find this funny.

In the week since, people of conscience around the world have been left to reckon with what may come of this brazen proclamation of a Trumpified world order. In particular, the BoP's presentation of plans for "New Gaza" offered stark clarity about the greed-driven intentions Trump, his inner circle, and their Israeli billionaire partners seek to pursue, while raising a fundamental question as to how such a project of colonization and land theft could claim any legal basis at all, let alone a moral one.

As it stands, the BoP charter elevates Trump to a position akin to a global dictator for life, unchecked – on paper – by any external mechanisms of accountability or transparency. Acting as permanent chairman, chief executive, and controlling shareholder of the organization, Trump has declared that he holds absolute veto power, while retaining complete discretion over the potential multibillion-dollar slush fund generated through permanent member fees. In keeping with his long record of felonies and fraud, all budgets, financial accounts, or disbursements the BoP deems "necessary" to carry out its sweeping mission are subject only to the so-called "institutions of controls or oversight mechanisms" designed by the very same Executive Board.

A few invited world leaders, mostly from the EU, have done little more than politely decline their invitations. While they have not yet bent the knee to Trump in this mobster's reality-show version of U.S. imperial power in action, this has not stopped those same governments from endorsing the other "peaceful actions" Trump is poised to pursue under the guise of BoP authority. These include the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and the seizure of Venezuelan oil; the execution of dozens of extrajudicial boat strikes that have killed more than one hundred people in the Caribbean; threats of war and the promotion of dangerous regime-change fantasies in Iran and Cuba; and support for his complete takeover of occupied Palestine through U.N. Security Council Resolution 2803. That resolution effectively granted Trump authority in Gaza by endorsing his 20-point Gaza peace plan and welcoming the BoP as a transitional governing body. Thus far, Greenland remains the only red line EU states have managed to articulate.

Despite some rejections, other governments have gone ahead and accepted their invitations for a free three-year membership. The participation of Israel's wanted genocidaire-in-chief, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, should serve as the clearest red flag that this organization has no interest in even

pretending to care about the lives of the Palestinian people or any standard of international law. Netanyahu could not even fly to Davos to attend the BoP's self-appointed pomp and circumstance for fear of being arrested as a wanted war criminal.

Other beacons of democracy and world peace, eager to lend legitimacy to the BoP, include Trump's own "favorite dictator," Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi; Argentina's scandal-prone, right-wing President Javier Milei; "Europe's last dictator," Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko; Netanyahu's idea of a "moral conscience," Albanian President Edi Rama; and Hungary's model in authoritarianism, Viktor Orbán. Leaders from Arab states – including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan, and Qatar – have also joined, and will presumably stand alongside Trump and the Executive Board to help oversee, and quietly endorse, "New Gaza."

Their participation set the stage for Davos, where none other than Jared Kushner delivered the first public presentation of an investment plan contingent upon the ethnic cleansing and erasure of a national Palestinian identity. Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and a member of the BoP "Executive Board," has long served as the self-styled "master planner" of transforming Gaza into a prime real estate opportunity. He has a track record of articulating his absolute disregard for Palestinian life, describing the besieged Gaza Strip in February 2024 as "very valuable...waterfront property."

dozed the UN Refugee headquarters in East Jerusalem, and the Israeli Knesset voted by an overwhelming majority to annex the entirety of the West Bank.

Amid the distortions and denials of reality, Kushner did allow the logic of the project to surface when he identified the architect behind the purported \$25 billion master plan for Gaza: Yakir Gabay, whom he described as "one of the most successful real estate developers and brilliant people I know." Gabay is an Israeli billionaire and international real estate tycoon with close familial ties to the Israeli government. Reports also indicate that he has participated in efforts to pressure Columbia University administrators to suppress student protests.

Much like Kushner, a recent article by the editor-in-chief of The Jerusalem Post, described Gabay as having been eager to craft a plan for "New Gaza" from the very first weeks of Israel's prolonged assault on the densely populated region:

"October 7, [Gabay] tends to say, woke him to action. [Gabay] thought: This time, my capabilities can change the face of reality...Other businesspeople heard about his work a year and a half ago. The White House had asked him to develop something even during Joe Biden's term. He has good relationships with Tony Blair and Kushner, and when Trump won the elections, it became easier to push the issue."

On the whole, Kushner's "New Gaza" presentation made no attempt to acknowledge a Palestinian state, recognize Palestinian self-determination,

international law. Palestinians who maintain their political consciousness, national identity, or will for self-determination, and who refuse to normalize occupation, are almost certain to be labeled "terrorists" or deemed insufficiently "deradicalized." Those who take up arms to defend their people against some of the world's most heavily armed and nuclear powers risk being denied existence in their own lands – murdered or turned away by the very architects of genocide who now claim to bring "peace." Access to basic rights is made contingent on surrendering political and economic agency, including abandoning a historically rooted cultural identity of resistance under occupation, forsaking traditional livelihoods, and subordinating the desire to shape the future of the land to whatever "economic opportunities" BoP members deem investible.

The document further states that only those who "support and act consistently" to establish a "deradicalized, terror-free Gaza that poses no threat to its neighbors" may participate in governance, reconstruction, economic development, or humanitarian assistance. It also bars any individuals or organizations the Board deems to have "supported or demonstrated a history of collaboration, infiltration, or influence with or by Hamas or other terror groups" – a sweeping allegation Israel has long weaponized without evidence. In practice, such standards mean that anyone who stands in firm solidarity with Palestinians, including international NGOs that seek to hold Israel to

ity over how surviving Palestinians live, how they are governed, and who may participate in decision-making. Only at the very bottom of the BoP's tyrannical hierarchy sits a so-called "technocratic committee," nominally including members of the Palestinian Authority. Its role appears purely advisory, permitted to exist only insofar as it appeases Trump and aligns with his agenda. There is little indication that it will serve, or even slightly represent, the people it claims to speak for.

The development is ultimately so jarring, so rooted in supremacist ideologies, and so flagrantly opposed to basic principles of sovereignty and human rights that it has few historical parallels. The closest comparison seems to be the gruesome reign of Belgian King Leopold II.

Those who participate in this process, including figures such as World Bank President Ajay Banga, lend legitimacy to a project that advances a perverse vision and a chapter of history that is not inevitable. Collaboration in the name of "reconstruction and development of Gaza" for a project so morally and legally corrupt is not a pragmatic compromise – it is active participation in a plan that has no place in the world. The human cost of this complicity is impossible to ignore.

The BoP plan also offers no conception of justice, reparations, or accountability for Israeli terror. Its version of "peace" is imposed through state violence to silence, control, and force Palestinians into submission. It is a project that raises skyscrapers for Western elites atop mass graves, without including, or even acknowledging, the Palestinians, its architects have killed and displaced. It relies too on the pathetic inaction of the overwhelming majority of UN member states.

Much remains unknown about what is immediately required to take a single step toward "peace" in the region: if and when Palestinians may finally find reprieve from Israeli bombardment, whether the Rafah crossing will actually open, what will become of finding and returning the bodies of loved ones buried under the rubble, whether human rights organizations or journalists will even be permitted to document the reality – and work safely – on the ground, if displaced Palestinians will ever be allowed to return to Gaza, and crucially, whether other states will intervene. What is clear, however, is the sheer evil of this project.

Following Kushner's presentation, many have rightfully said that if this BoP monstrosity were fictional, it would be so dark it would border on being unbelievable. And yet it is profoundly real: a greed-soaked plan dependent on mass murder and land theft, driven by men so wealthy and entitled that they believe they can escape accountability while reaping billions in profit in the process.

World leaders have long entrenched impunity and rewarded the most atrocious US-Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity, especially over the past two and a half years. Yet the Board's ambitions – laid out in a charter that mirrors the UN and spans what Trump calls "the whole region of the world" – reveal a danger that stretches far beyond Palestine. The very consideration of such an inhumane, corrupt, and cruel project is a threat to humanity. And still – precisely because of the chaos, confusion, and sheer audacity of their plans – this dystopian vision for "New Gaza" is not inevitable. Those with political and economic power must firmly reject and actively work to rein in this Orwellian BoP. If any entity requires immediate disarmament and deradicalization, it is Trump and his so-called Executive Board.

The article was first published in CounterPunch.



US President Donald Trump holds a signed Charter of the Board of Peace, as he takes part in a charter announcement for his Board of Peace initiative aimed at resolving global conflicts, alongside the 56th annual World Economic Forum (WEF), in Davos, Switzerland on January 22, 2026.
REUTERS

Kushner began his chilling slideshow by urging skeptical investors to "just calm down for 30 days," declaring, "the war is over. Let's work together." Eager to move on to their real business of "peace," Kushner appeared wholly willing to ignore the ongoing forced starvation, imprisonment, systemic torture, murder, and displacement of Palestinians across the occupied territories. Since the supposed "ceasefire" in October 2025, the Israeli military has killed at least 477 Palestinians in Gaza.

Trump has also failed to address Israel's continued ban on dozens of international humanitarian and non-governmental organizations, a policy that has deliberately denied life-saving aid and medical care to the region while newborn babies continue to die of hypothermia. Instead, Kushner outright lied about the current scale of Israel's designed humanitarian catastrophe, claiming that "100% of the food needs are met" and that "the cost of needs has gone down," before unironically describing the administration's role as "the largest humanitarian effort into a war zone that anyone's been able to tell us about." Meanwhile, as the conference unfolded, Israeli forces bull-

nor address Israeli occupation or the implications of Gaza's 'reconstruction' for the other occupied Palestinian territories. Instead, the eerily bizarre AI-generated slideshow of skyscrapers, oil rigs, and industrial complexes offered only a glimpse into the twisted billionaire fantasy that Kushner's inner circle – including figures like Gabay – has sought to merge with Zionist imaginaries.

The only part of Kushner's presentation that even acknowledged Palestinians was a single slide on "Palestinian-led demilitarization." Beyond this ominous token reference, the narrative repeatedly circled back to framing Gaza as "an amazing investment opportunity" to the room full of multi-millionaires and billionaires.

Recent reporting from Drop Site News has confirmed and expanded upon this language, revealing "Resolution No. 2026/1," an unsigned State Department document from December 2025 that declares the Board of Peace aims to transform Gaza into a "deradicalized and demilitarized terror-free zone." Here, "deradicalization" functions as a catch-all term to delegitimize resistance and criminalize opposition to Israeli occupation – a legal right under

even minimal standards of accountability, will likely be barred from operating in Gaza. This has already become an entrenched and worsening reality since October 2023. What the BoP presents as a security framework is, in essence, a blueprint for controlling Palestinian movement, erasing any viable possibility of a Palestinian state, and ultimately, advancing ethnic cleansing, while preventing humanitarian organizations from participating in any meaningful process of reconstruction or the delivery of aid. A framework that insists "no one will be forced to leave Gaza" – as if forced removal were ever legitimate – while simultaneously conditioning access to aid, resources, and even limited political participation on compliance with what Trump and his confidants dictate, is not a framework in which any meaningful shred of freedom or dignity can exist.

In essence, Trump now supposedly wields full legislative, executive, and judicial control over the future of Gaza. He alone, along with his board of resort profiteers – who would hastily clear away the rubble burying the bodies of erased bloodlines and the remnants of mosques, churches, hospitals, and schools – will have complete author-

Weight-class doubts loom for Yazdani after 97kg setback in Zagreb

Sports Desk

Questions surrounding Hassan Yazdani's bid for an elusive second Olympic gold at Los Angeles 2028 have intensified in recent days after the Iranian wrestling great suffered a comprehensive defeat to an unheralded American opponent in the freestyle 97kg final at the Zagreb Open last week.

Making his first international appearance since his 86kg final loss at the Paris Olympics 18 months ago, Yazdani – winner of a national-record 10 world and Olympic medals – appeared to be back to his familiar best as he cruised to three technical-superiority victories in the morning session to reach the final in his new weight class.

Yazdani also looked in control early in the title bout, taking a 2-1 lead into the break against Stephen Buchanan. However, he was handed a harsh reality check in the second period as the American landed a four-point suplex before powering to a shock 13-3 win, handing Yazdani the first technical-superiority defeat of his illustrious career.

Returning from a second surgery on his injured shoulder, Yazdani opted to test himself two weight classes higher, stepping up from his familiar 86kg category to 97kg in a bid to redefine the next phase of his ca-



Iran's Hassan Yazdani (L) is seen in action against American Stephen Buchanan in the freestyle 97kg final at the Zagreb Open in Zagreb, Croatia, on February 5, 2026. ● IAWF

reer. However, his performance in the Croatian capital suggested the transition may require more time — or possibly a re-think.

The final defeat exposed clear physical and tactical challenges at the new weight, raising immediate questions over whether 97kg is the right long-term category for the Iranian star.

However, Hemmat Moslemi, Yazdani's long-time mentor and

formative coach, insisted the Zagreb outing was always intended as an experiment rather than a definitive judgment.

"After being away from competition for a year and a half, Hassan had to start somewhere," Moslemi told Varzesh3. "He only wrestled in two bouts in the domestic league beforehand, and league bouts are nothing like international tournaments. He needed to understand how his

body responds after moving up to 97kg."

Moslemi also pointed to logistical challenges that disrupted preparation, including uncertainty over travel arrangements and late visa approvals. According to the coach, Yazdani did not know until the final days whether he would even be able to compete in Zagreb.

From a tactical standpoint, Moslemi was particularly critical of

Yazdani's approach in the final. He revealed that he had advised the Iranian star not to attempt underneath attacks against a physically stronger opponent – an advice that ultimately went unheeded.

"The first three minutes were good," Moslemi said. "But in the second period, he went underneath four times and was punished each time. The American wasn't better than Hassan.

Hassan lost because of his own tactical mistakes."

Moslemi went further, suggesting Yazdani should not have wrestled the final at all, arguing that the tournament's ranking points and gold medal carried little value compared to the risk of injury or a loss of confidence. Despite the criticism, Moslemi dismissed the idea that Yazdani should overhaul his wrestling style to suit the higher weight. "With this style, Hassan has won 10 Olympic and world medals. At this stage of the career, you don't change who you are," he said, while acknowledging that adjustments are inevitable when moving between weight classes. Looking ahead, Moslemi believes a move to 92kg could offer Yazdani a more realistic path, at least until the year before the Olympic Games. He revealed that Yazdani had no difficulty making weight in Zagreb and was well under the limit prior to the weigh-in.

"The 97kg division is crowded with elite contenders like Kyle Snyder, Abdulrashid Sadulaev and Akhmed Tazhudinov," Moslemi said. "Hassan can beat anyone, but 92kg suits him better right now."

For Moslemi, Yazdani's greatest strength has always been his willingness to listen and adapt – a quality he believes must guide the next decision in a career-defining period.

Iranian fencer Moradi wins historic World Cup gold



Iran's Hesam Moradi (2nd L) poses with his cadet gold medal on the podium at the Sabre Coupe du Monde event in Dakar, Senegal, on February 12, 2026. ● irfnc.ir

Sports Desk

Young Iranian fencer Hesam Moradi claimed a historic men's gold medal in the cadet category at the Sabre Coupe du Monde event in Dakar, Senegal, on Thursday.

The 16-year-old prodigy capped his landmark campaign with a 15-12 victory over Ecuador's Jose Daniel Valencia Olmedo in the final, clinching Iran's first-ever Sabre World Cup gold medal at

the cadet level.

Moradi won four of his five bouts to finish fifth overall in the pool standings and advance to the round of 16, where he defeated Ishak Dali 15-4.

A 15-11 victory over Kenya's Kinoti Kiara then sent Moradi into the semifinals, before the Iranian edged Mexico's Nathan Mungia 15-13 to book his place in the final. Mungia and Tunisia's Mohamed Hedi El Ghanja shared the bronze medal.

Shahdab's Behnejad suspended 'until further notice' by Iranian federation

Sports Desk

Shahdab Yazd setter Arshia Behnejad has been suspended "until further notice," the League Organization of the Iranian Volleyball Federation announced late on Thursday. The suspension – pending a Disciplinary Committee hearing – was imposed over the 22-year-old's "behavioral misconduct, use of abusive language, and protests deemed excessive and outside accepted norms" during Shahdab's Iranian Volleyball Premier League clash against Razin Polymer on Thursday.

Shahdab withstood Razin's fight-back to secure a 3-2 victory (25-23, 23-25, 25-22, 21-25, 15-9) and remain second behind Foolad Sirjan in the top-flight standings, with 13 wins and 38 points from 15 regular-season matches.

The closing stages of the contest



Shahdab Yazd setter Arshia Behnejad is pictured in action during a 3-2 victory over Razin Polymer in the Iranian Volleyball Premier League in Tehran, Iran, on February 12, 2026. ● volleyball.ir

were marred by heated protests from players on both sides over officiating decisions, leading to chaotic scenes.

A world under-21 champion with Iran in 2023, Behnejad played an

integral role for the senior national team under Italian head coach Roberto Piazza during last year's Volleyball Nations League, where Iran finished eighth in the preliminary standings, as well as in

its quarterfinal run at the World Championship in the Philippines. Elsewhere in the latest round of league fixtures, defending champion Foolad Sirjan cruised to a straight-sets victory (25-15, 25-13, 25-18) over Mes Rafsanjan to tighten its grip on top spot with 14 wins and 40 points.

Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan defeated Shahrdari Urmia 3-0 (33-31, 25-16, 25-17) to climb to third place with 11 wins and 32 points, leapfrogging Chadormalou, which also has 11 victories but fell to a 3-1 defeat (25-22, 25-17, 28-30, 25-19) against sixth-placed Paykan.

San'atgaran Omid and Mehregan Noor, meanwhile, overcame Tabiat Eslamshahr and Esteghlal Gonbad in straight sets, respectively, to move into seventh and eighth in the standings and remain in contention for a place in the end-of-season playoffs.

Iran's Vafaei qualifies for 2026 World Open

Sports Desk

Iranian snooker player Hossein Vafaei secured a place at the 2026 World Open – which begins on March 16 in Yushan, China – after defeating China's Lan Yuhao in the qualifying round in Barnsley, England, on Thursday.

The 17-year-old Chinese compiled breaks of 121 and 117, but those were the only frames he claimed, as Vafaei sealed a 5-2 victory.

Vafaei's fellow Iranian Amir

Sarkhosh was also in qualifying action on Thursday but suffered a 5-4 defeat to China's He Guoqiang, missing out on a spot in next month's World Snooker Tour event.

The biggest upset of the qualifiers saw Chinese star Ding Junhui miss out on competing on home soil. The 2017 champion went down 5-2 to Hong Kong's Marco Fu, who made breaks of 86 and 91 before sealing victory with a 116.

Ding, who has now lost his last four matches on the cir-

cuit, will not play again until the World Championship in April and faces an anxious wait to see whether he retains a seeded place in the main draw at the Crucible Theatre. Fans in Yushan can look forward to a star-studded first round featuring defending champion John Higgins, world champion Zhao Xintong, world number one Judd Trump, seven-time world champion Ronnie O'Sullivan, and China's number two Xiao Guodong.



Handicrafts value chain to be bolstered via gov't-drafted comprehensive policy



● marsin.ir

Iranica Desk

Iran's handicrafts sector is one of the country's most deeply rooted cultural and economic assets, shaped by centuries of craftsmanship, regional diversity, and accumulated indigenous knowledge. From textiles, ceramics, and metalwork to wood and stone crafts, these products embody local identities while also reflecting broader cultural values embedded in everyday Iranian life. Beyond their artistic and heritage dimensions, handicrafts have long functioned as a source of livelihood, community cohesion, and cultural continuity, particularly in rural and small-scale production settings. As the scope of this sector has expanded and its role within the cultural and creative economy has become more prominent, the need for a coherent, cross-sectoral framework to organize production, distribution, supply, and export has gained increasing attention. In response to these structural requirements, a comprehensive policy document has been formulated to guide the sustainable development of hand-

icrafts at the national level. Within this framework, the Cabinet has recently approved the Comprehensive Document for the Management of the Production, Distribution, Supply, and Export Chain of Handicrafts, following a proposal by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts and pursuant to Clause (d) of Article 83 of the Seventh Five-Year National Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The document, adopted in compliance with resolutions of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, serves as the national roadmap for the sustainable development of Iran's handicrafts sector. It obliges all relevant executive bodies to carry out the duties and measures outlined in the plan. The approval was formally communicated with the signature of Mohammad Reza Aref, First Vice President. According to the document, the government's primary objective is to complete and strengthen the handicrafts value chain, improve production and supply conditions, expand domestic and international

markets, and enhance the role of handicrafts within Iran's cultural and creative economy. The text emphasizes that Iranian handicrafts, beyond their economic function, play a fundamental role in reinforcing cultural and identity-based values and promoting the Iranian-Islamic lifestyle. From this perspective, handicrafts are considered a key component of the country's "identity-based economy." In its definitions section, the document clarifies key concepts such as the handicrafts value chain, professional handicrafts associations, cultural-economic diplomacy, empowerment, large-scale handicrafts enterprises, and qualified institutions. The handicrafts value chain is defined as an integrated set of activities — from design and production to distribution, marketing, and export—aimed at preserving authenticity and regional identity while enhancing both the cultural and economic value of products. The principles and policy directions of the document focus on improving the entire value chain, safeguarding national

authenticity and local identity, developing target markets to achieve an eight-percent growth rate, increasing investment in handicrafts, and institutionalizing the consumption of handicraft products within the Iranian lifestyle. The document further outlines its macro-strategies, including encouraging investment — particularly by large enterprises, cooperatives, and professional associations — ensuring sustainable access to raw materials, improving product quality and authentic design, strengthening distribution and sales networks through innovation and technology, diversifying exports, empowering human resources, and enhancing the position of handicrafts in household consumption. Implementation requirements emphasize the creation of mechanisms to attract and guide investment, the establishment of a modern education and skills system based on the traditional master-apprentice model, the development of data-driven infrastructure and a national handicrafts platform, demand stimulation through cultural storytelling and media

campaigns, the organization of credit facilities, and the creation of sustainable marketing and export infrastructure. Overall, the Comprehensive Document for Managing the Production, Distribution, Supply, and Export Chain of Handicrafts stands as a key upstream policy framework in the cultural industries sector, outlining an integrated approach to organizing, developing, and strengthening Iran's handicrafts at both national and international levels. At the same time, the document is framed against the backdrop of the wide diversity of handicrafts produced across Iran's cities and regions, each shaped by local history, climate, materials, and cultural traditions. Cities such as Isfahan are internationally recognized for metal engraving, enamelwork, and miniature painting, while Tabriz is closely associated with leather crafts, metalwork, and traditional weaving. In Yazd and Kashan, textiles such as handwoven fabrics, brocades, and carpets reflect centuries-old production techniques adapted to desert environments.

In western and northwestern regions, including Kermanshah and Kurdistan provinces, traditional weaving, woodcraft, and felt-making remain closely tied to nomadic and rural lifestyles, while southern provinces such as Hormozgan and Bushehr are known for maritime-inspired crafts, palm-leaf weaving, and shell-based decorative arts. In eastern Iran, cities like Mashhad and Birjand maintain distinctive traditions in stone carving, embroidery, and textile production, rooted in both local demand and cross-regional trade routes. This geographic and cultural diversity underscores the importance of a flexible, value-chain-oriented policy framework capable of accommodating regional specificities while strengthening national coordination. By addressing production, distribution, and export within a unified structure, the comprehensive document seeks to create conditions under which local handicraft traditions can be preserved, economically sustained, and more effectively introduced to domestic and international markets.

Winter adventures at Khoshaku Ski Resort in Urmia

Iranica Desk

Khoshaku Ski Resort is one of the most exciting destinations for winter sports enthusiasts. It is located in northwestern Iran, near the city of Urmia, which is the capital of West Azarbaijan Province. This complex is currently the only active ski slope in the province, and for this reason, it welcomes large numbers of domestic and international skiers every year during the cold season. It is worth mentioning that Khoshaku is also the name of one of the villages located in the Urmia region, from which the resort takes its name. The complex is situated approximately 30 kilometers west of Urmia, in the Razhan area, which enjoys favorable climatic conditions. The total area of this region is about 50,000 square meters. Due to its heavy snowfall during winter, the complex



● IRNA

has become one of the major winter sports hubs in northwestern Iran. The Khoshaku ski slope lies at an elevation of about 2,800 meters above sea level, which makes it suitable for various snow-related activities and ensures good snow

quality throughout the season, according to visitiran.ir. The best time to visit the complex is in late autumn, and its facilities remain usable throughout the winter months. The resort offers shops that sell or rent skiing equipment



● neshan.org

and related gear, as well as experienced instructors who are ready to train beginners and advanced applicants. In addition to skiing and snowboarding, paragliding is also available at the resort. Many visitors come not only for sports but

also to enjoy leisure activities such as making snowmen or riding snow tubes. The Urmia Telecabin connects Khoshaku Ski Resort to Kuh-e Sir (Sir Daghi), offering scenic views of the surrounding landscape. Because of its close proximity to the urban

area, this complex is one of the most popular recreational destinations for the residents of Urmia. The presence of mineral springs, attractive green spaces, and a safe environment creates unforgettable experiences for tourists. In addition, a variety of restaurants, cafés, and hotels are available in the area to accommodate visitors. The road leading to the resort is paved and smooth, allowing visitors to reach the complex by private car. However, it is important to equip your vehicle with tire chains and appropriate driving equipment for snowy conditions, as the road can become slippery at times. After arriving at the complex, visitors can park their vehicles in the designated parking lot. Khoshaku Ski Resort is open and ready to serve guests on Thursdays and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Minister outlines people-centered heritage policy in Semnan

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri, outlined a people-centered approach to heritage management during a two-day visit to Semnan Province on February 11-12, saying restored historic sites should function primarily for public benefit rather than commercial gain. Addressing reporters after touring key historical sites in Semnan city on Wednesday, Salehi-Amiri said the ministry's "definitive policy" is to transfer the functional use of restored monuments to the people while ensuring that any revenue generated is reinvested into maintenance and administration rather than commercial profit, IRNA reported. He described Semnan as a civiliza-

tional crossroads linking eastern Iran to the central plateau, citing its strategic position from Greater Khorasan to Rey and present-day Tehran. Strengthening tourism infrastructure and completing pending cultural projects, he said, could elevate the province into a significant national tourism hub. As part of the policy shift, the Safavid-era Shah Abbasi Caravanserai of Semnan is to be converted into a regional museum with heritage and ethnographic functions. The project, coordinated with provincial authorities, is designed to anchor cultural activity in the historic core and enhance visitor retention. Salehi-Amiri also confirmed that the Jameh Mosque of Semnan, noted for its architectural layers spanning the Seljuk to Qajar periods and its millennium-old minaret, is among the properties on Iran's UN-

ESCO tentative list. He said the mosque remains on the pathway towards eventual world heritage nomination, subject to international review procedures. During meetings with local officials, lawmakers and cultural practitioners, the minister endorsed the establishment of a permanent handicrafts exhibition venue in Semnan to provide direct market access for artisans and integrate provincial production into national distribution networks. He framed handicrafts as a pillar of Iran's identity-based cultural economy. Addressing the growing threat of land subsidence to historic structures, Salehi-Amiri said the issue is being handled through a national, science-based mechanism. Comprehensive assessments have been submitted to the government, and heritage sites have been prioritized

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi-Amiri and accompanying officials visit the historic Jameh Mosque of Semnan, north-central Iran, during an official trip to the province, February 11, 2026.
● IRNA



according to vulnerability. Specialist conservation teams have begun preventive interventions in affected provinces, he added, stressing that sustainable water management reform remains central to long-term mitigation. The visit included inspections of Semnan's historic bazaar and urban fabric, as well as heritage sites in Damghan and Shahrud. In Shahrud, the minister said the city should secure a dedicated museum facility, with the ministry prepared

to equip the building once provided by municipal authorities. Salehi-Amiri announced that a coordinated national program for

Nowruz and Eid al-Fitr celebrations will be submitted to the cabinet, with around 1,000 cultural events planned nationwide.

Iran salutes Shahin Farhat's enduring fusion of Western symphony, Persian music

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Mehdi Shafiei, on Friday praised veteran composer Shahin Farhat for what he described as an unparalleled role in blending Western classical structures with Iran's cultural and civilizational heritage, during a visit to the musician's home in Tehran.

Shafiei, accompanied by Mohammad Allahyari Foumani, the CEO of the Rudaki Foundation, and Babak Rezaei, director-general of the Music Office at the ministry, met Farhat one day before the closing ceremony of the 41st Fajr International Music Festival, IRNA reported.

Shafiei described Farhat, widely known as the "father of Iran's symphony", as a composer whose oeuvre stands as a durable reference point for scholars, musicians and students alike.

He cited the symphonic poems 'Persian Gulf' and 'Damavand' as emblematic works in which Western compositional frameworks are interwoven with Iranian melodic modes, historical memory and landscapes. "The distinctive hallmark of Professor Farhat's work lies in his ability to anchor Western classical music in the atmosphere and identity of Iranian music," Shafiei said. He added that the composer had produced works with universal form while preserving a distinctly Iranian sensibility shaped by nature, history and culture.

Shafiei noted that the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet of Islam this year provided an opportunity to publish and promote Farhat's dedicated symphony for the Prophet, describing it as one of the composer's significant religious works. Allahyari highlighted Farhat's tenure as secretary of two editions of the Fajr festival, crediting his structured planning and professional outlook with broadening participation across musical genres and raising artistic standards. He said those editions ranked among the most enduring in the festival's four-decade



The combo shows Iran's Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mehdi Shafiei meeting veteran composer Shahin Farhat at his home in Tehran, Iran, ahead of the closing ceremony of the 41st Fajr International Music Festival, in this handout image released in February 2026. Shafiei was accompanied by Mohammad Allahyari Foumani of the Rudaki Foundation and Babak Rezaei, director-general of the Music Office at the ministry.
● IRNA

history.

He also pointed to Farhat's sustained engagement with regional and ethnic Iranian music, calling it evidence of the composer's commitment to safeguarding diverse musical traditions within a symphonic framework. Allahyari added that the Rudaki Foundation could program selected symphonies by Farhat for performance by its orchestras in order to familiarize wider audiences with his artistic legacy.

Farhat, who has spent years living and studying in the West, said his attachment to Iran had never diminished. "I have always loved Iran," he said, noting that many of his works bear explicitly Iranian titles, including symphonies inspired by the Persian Gulf, Mount Damavand and the poet Omar Khayyam. He said he had drawn on Iranian modal systems in these compositions.

Referring to Mount Damavand as an enduring source of inspiration, Farhat said he had long aspired, since childhood, to compose a piece reflecting the grandeur of what he described as an ancient national symbol.

مزایده صادراتی بیلت آلیاژی ریخته‌گری مداوم

شرکت فولاد آلیاژی ایران

شماره مرجع مزایده: IASCO-EXPT-07 مورخ: ۱۴۰۴/۱۱/۲۱

شرکت فولاد آلیاژی ایران (IASCO) در نظر دارد نسبت به فروش بیلت آلیاژی صادراتی، از طریق مزایده عمومی اقدام نماید. خاطرنشان می‌سازد که عرضه در گزید منتخب و به شرح جزئیات ذیل انجام می‌پذیرد. از علاقمندان به شرکت در مزایده مزبور دعوت به عمل می‌آید که از تاریخ ۱۴۰۴/۱۱/۲۱ لغایت ۱۴۰۴/۱۱/۲۷ برای دریافت اطلاعات مزایده و راهنمایی‌های لازم با واحد صادرات به شماره تماس‌های ۰۲۱-۸۸۳۲۲۶۷۵ و ۰۲۱-۸۸۳۲۲۶۲۱ و آدرس ایمیل Salesexp@iasco.net در ارتباط باشند. مهلت ارائه پیشنهاد قیمت مزایده یادشده حداکثر ساعت ۱۵:۰۰ روز سه‌شنبه مورخ ۱۴۰۴/۱۱/۲۸ می‌باشد.

Iran Alloy Steel Company

Tender Announcement for Export of CC-Alloy Steel Billet

Tender Ref. No.: IASCO-EXPT-07 Date: 02/10/2026

Please be informed that Iran Alloy Steel Company (IASCO) intends to launch a general Tender for the export of CC-Alloy Steel Billet under the following terms and conditions:

1. Product Specifications and Commercial terms:

Main Tender Grades & Quality	Acc. to attached specification No.
9403I	C07KU9403I40411A042
* Other Grades may also be considered By Customer Request with related premium price. (Please clearly specify the desired grade, analysis and etc).	

● Size & Dimensions: (130*130) *12,000 mm.

● Quantity: 20.000 MT (±10%).

● Delivery Time: approximately 3 weeks after receipt of advance payment.

● Delivery Term: FOB Bandar Abbas.

Note: Other delivery ports including BIK, Parsian, and Chabahar may be considered upon buyer's request, subject to amended delivery time and mutual agreement. FCA Yazd may also be considered under the same conditions.

2. Tender General Conditions:

a. The offer must remain valid for at least seven (7) Iranian working days from the submission deadline.

b. Vague, conditional or incomplete offers will not be considered.

c. The buyer's company must be legally registered outside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

d. IASCO reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers at its sole discretion.

e. All payments shall be deemed valid only upon the Seller's receipt of official bank confirmation.

f. Submission of offer implies full acceptance of all tender terms and conditions.

3. Offer Submission:

For instructions and further information, kindly contact the Export Department using the following details:

Tel: +9835-31222675 & +9821-88322621.

Email: Salesexp@iasco.net (For registration only, not to send any offer).

4. Closing Date:

Deadline for Offer Submission: Tuesday, February 17, 2026- by 3:00 p.m. (Tehran Local Time)