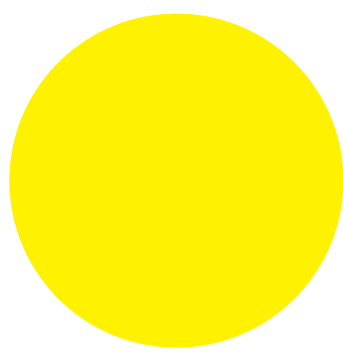


IRGC likens US humiliating defeat to 1980 Tabas Operation fiasco

Parliament speaker derides Trump's 'victory' bluster in rescue op.

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Iran's UN envoy raps strikes on petchem sites, bridges as war crimes

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Iran gains strategic upper hand through controlling Strait of Hormuz

Opinion by Mohammad Bayat, International affairs analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Forty days into the joint US-Israeli aggression against Iran, the war has not proceeded according to the invaders' initial plans. The failure to achieve their primary objectives has reportedly caused confusion and disarray within the enemy camp and among its decision-makers.

The situation that the aggressors, led by the United States, is facing today is the result of their miscalculation regarding Iran's political and social structure, and ultimately the combat capability of its armed forces.

The enemy's assessment and the image that the Zionist regime had shaped for the Americans before the start of the war was that through joint military aggression and rapid operations against Iran, targeting the command circle — namely the meeting of the Supreme National Defense Council and the commander-in-chief, the Leader — the establishment would be shocked and would be paralyzed within 72 hours. Subsequently, with the initial blows they would inflict on Iran during the war, they would place the establishment in a state of severe weakness and collapse, paving the way for Iran's surrender.

Contrary to these expectations, Iran has maintained a cohesive defensive front. While the US-Israeli alliance has achieved some tactical successes by hitting predetermined targets in its "target bank," inflicting human and material losses — to which Iran has responded in kind. But at the strategic level, the situation is different, and it appears that Iran is one step ahead of its enemies.

Previously, the core disputes centered on nuclear, missile, and regional issues, leadership succession and Iran's future relations with China. Iran has now revealed a new card: the Strait of Hormuz and global energy security.

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Nation marches in glory, unity to support Islamic Establishment



People wave Iran's flags during a gathering to support the establishment amid an aggression by the US and Israel in the city of Shahr-e Kord, Iran, on April 4, 2026.

FARS

National Desk

Iranians from all walks of life took to the streets in many cities across the country on Saturday for the thirty-fifth night to show their unity and support for the country and armed forces fighting American and Israeli aggressors.

Iranians gathered in the cities' main squares, shrugging off the US president's threats to bomb Iran "back to the Stone Ages" as blasts hit many cities including

the capital Tehran. Waiving Iran's flags and holding placards and pictures of those martyred in the ongoing aggression by the US and Israel, the Iranians chant slogans against the US and the regime.

The gatherings are aimed at showing unity and resistance against the unprovoked aggression by the US and Israel as well as voicing unwavering loyalty to Iran's leadership. The people take to the streets each night, filling public squares

to show loyalty even amid the strikes.

In Isfahan and Kashan, the combination of sporting enthusiasm, media productions, and the presence of the people created a special manifestation of the natural flow of life.

In the western cities of Kermanshah, Qasr-e Shirin, and Kangavar images of public presence in urban spaces, depicting scenes of resilience and solidarity. Iranians in the central city of Yazd said they participate in the

nightly gatherings to support the establishment and revolution, and to show their love for Iran and confronting the US bullying.

The massive gathering of the people also took place in the northern city of Behshahr in Mazandaran Province. The people called for revenge for the killing of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as well as the students of the southern city of Minab in the US and Israeli attacks.

In recent days, Iranian officials including President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, have also participated in the gatherings, walking openly in the streets among small crowds despite recent assassinations of Iranian officials.

The US and the Israeli regime have launched a large-scale unprovoked military campaign against Iran since February 28. Hundreds of Iranians have lost their lives in the aggression.



SCO ministers caution against regional impacts of Iran war

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Iran's domestic league players set for national training camp

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Nowruz box office draws 31,000 viewers despite wartime constraints

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IRGC likens US humiliating defeat to 1980 Tabas Operation fiasco

Parliament speaker derides Trump's 'victory' bluster in rescue op.

International Desk

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) announced on Sunday that the United States has once again suffered a "humiliating defeat" on Iranian soil, likening the failed American mission to the 1980 "Operation Tabas" disaster. "Following desperate measures by the American enemy to rescue the pilot of a downed fighter jet, and the subsequent entry of enemy aircraft into the central regions of the country, a joint operation was launched by the IRGC Aerospace and Ground Forces, alongside popular volunteer units (Basij) and Law Enforcement

Forces (FARAJA)," the IRGC Public Relations Department said in a statement.

The statement confirmed that the enemy aircraft were intercepted and destroyed, asserting that "the United States has once again incurred a humiliating defeat, mirroring the failure of the Tabas Operation."

The IRGC further noted that US President Donald Trump had previously claimed in a tweet that a "special operation" was underway to rescue the pilot of the aircraft downed in Iran, an attempt the IRGC characterized as a "cover-up" for a heavy strategic failure.

Referencing the historical failure of the 1980 US rescue mission in the Tabas desert, the statement concluded with a direct warning, "Trump the gambler, the God of the sands of Tabas still exists."

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf also mocked on Sunday Trump's claims regarding last night's failed rescue operation by posting images of the downed American helicopters.

Sharing photos of a destroyed US aircraft — wrecked during a joint operation by Iran's Armed Forces — on his official X account, Qalibaf said, "If the United States achieves three

more such 'victories,' it will be completely destroyed."

Earlier, Lieutenant Colonel Ebrahim Zolfaghari, spokesperson for the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, announced that the "desperate efforts" by the enemy to rescue their downed fighter pilot had failed due to the timely joint operations of the IRGC, the Army, the Basij, and Law Enforcement Forces. He confirmed that the aggressor aircraft, including two Black Hawk helicopters and one C-130 military transport plane, were struck in southern Isfahan and were seen burning following the successful defense by the "warriors of Islam."

The Army also announced the successful interception and destruction of a Hermes 900 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in the skies over Isfahan.

"An hour ago, a 'Hermes 900' drone belonging to the US-Israeli aggressors was intercepted and destroyed by a successful strike from the Army's Air Defense Force systems in the general area of Isfahan," the Army's Public Relations Department stated.

With the downing of this aircraft, the total number of enemy drones destroyed by the integrated network of the country's Joint Air Defense Headquarters has reached 162.



The combo pictures show the site of two Black Hawk helicopters and one C-130 military transport plane struck by Iran's Armed Forces in southern Isfahan on April 5, 2026.

SCO ministers caution against regional impacts of Iran war



The SCO's seventh environmental meeting was held in Kyrgyzstan on April 2-3, 2026.

International Desk

Ministers and environmental officials from member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have expressed grave concern over the environmental consequences of recent attacks by the United States and Israel on Iran.

The concerns were formally raised during the organization's seventh environmental meeting, held in Kyrgyzstan on April 2-3. In the final protocol of the session, the member states condemned attacks targeting Iran's energy and vaccine production infrastructure, warning that the resulting biological and environmental hazards pose a threat to the entire region.

Iran's Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, Gholamhossein Yadegari, who represented Iran in the meeting, condemned the military aggression against non-military sites, including oil and gas facilities and vaccine production centers. The US-Israeli aggression, which began on February 28, have recently focused on civilian infrastructure. Reported targets have included universities, hospitals, and schools. Specific sites of concern are the Pasteur Institute of Iran, a major vaccine production center where damage could create public health risks, and the Mahshahr Petrochemical complex, where strikes risk the release of hazardous chemicals.

The SCO meeting primarily focused on sustainable resource management, climate change, biodiversity protection, and cross-border environmental cooperation.

In such circumstances, we can say that although we have suffered serious blows on the battlefield — whether in offensive and defensive operations, infrastructure and facilities — but in the strategic field, which ultimately determines the result of the war, Iran holds the upper hand. The achievement of the current conflict, whose full effects may unfold in the coming years, is Iran's dominance over the Strait of Hormuz. This control grants Iran a power tool comparable to the Suez Canal for Egypt or the Strait of Malacca for the United States. It also creates

FM warns UN of catastrophic risk from strikes on peaceful nuclear sites

IAEA chief's data disclosure could fuel attacks on nuclear facilities: Araghchi

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned about the severe humanitarian and environmental consequences of ongoing military attacks by the United States and Israel on Iran's safeguarded, peaceful nuclear facilities.

In a formal letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the Security Council on April 5, Araghchi condemned the strikes, which occurred during a 12-day conflict in June and have continued since the latest escalation began on February 28, according to IRNA.

He stressed that these illegal actions, particularly those targeting the operational Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant—a facility dedicated exclusively to peaceful purposes under the full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—pose a grave risk of radioactive contamination for the entire region.

The letter detailed a series of attacks throughout March on sites including the Natanz nuclear facility, the Bushehr plant, the heavy water produc-



Abbas Araghchi
IRNA

tion plant in Khondab, and the Shahid Ahmadi Roshan uranium enrichment site.

Araghchi expressed deep regret that these actions have not been met with explicit condemnation from relevant international bodies, criticizing the UN Security Council, the IAEA Board of Governors, and its Director General for failing to take effective measures or even denounce the violations.

He highlighted the extreme danger of repeated strikes near the Bushehr plant, stating that the "deliberate targeting of areas adjacent to such facilities, with full knowledge

of the inherent risk of radiological release, constitutes a clear violation of the Agency's safeguards regime and exposes civilian populations—both within Iran and across the region—to severe and unprecedented peril."

The minister further warned that the warfare methods employed risk massive environmental devastation, including potential radioactive pollution of the Persian Gulf, the regional atmosphere, terrestrial ecosystems, and vital natural resources. Such damage, he argued, would inevitably cross national borders, threatening public health, ecological bal-

ance, and economic stability for the broader population.

IAEA chief under fire

Araghchi also criticized recent statements by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi, accusing him of a serious deviation from his mandate, violating the IAEA statute and the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA).

Araghchi asserted that during a media interview in March, Grossi disclosed sensitive safeguards-related information about Iran's peaceful nuclear program, which, based on past experience, could facilitate further attacks on Iran's safeguarded facilities.

He also labeled as "deeply concerning and alarming" Grossi's recent remarks alluding to the potential use of nuclear weapons against Iran, which he said implicitly normalize such threats against an NPT member state engaged in peaceful nuclear energy use.

The letter concluded with regret that there is no indication the IAEA intends to correct its past mistakes or return to a professional, impartial, and technically grounded approach consistent with its founding statute and the CSA.

Iran gains strategic ...

In response to the aggression and the support provided by some Persian Gulf states to the enemy, including hosting US bases and personnel, Iran moved to block the Strait of Hormuz. This action is seen as a major strategic victory. Its significance lies in its potential to impact the entire world, influencing global fuel and energy prices, food security, and economic stability from West Africa to North America, Australia, Japan, and China. The effects of this move are already being felt worldwide.

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In such circumstances, we can say that although we have suffered serious blows on the battlefield — whether in offensive and defensive operations, infrastructure and facilities — but in the strategic field, which ultimately determines the result of the war, Iran holds the upper hand. The achievement of the current conflict, whose full effects may unfold in the coming years, is Iran's dominance over the Strait of Hormuz. This control grants Iran a power tool comparable to the Suez Canal for Egypt or the Strait of Malacca for the United States. It also creates

a dynamic of military and competitive influence similar to what Russia and Turkey wield over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. Consequently, Iran has transformed itself into an unchallenged power in global energy security. Countries worldwide must now coordinate with Tehran for passage through the Strait of Hormuz — a great strategic victory. In light of this development, the US President Donald Trump, to avoid further losses and prevent the conflict from escalating to other critical waterways like the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, should

swiftly seek a face-saving exit from the war. Otherwise, if the situation escalates to controlling the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, then Iran can assert itself as a global power. Therefore, the reasonable course of action for Donald Trump is to moderate his conditions and accept Iran's terms and declare the end of the war sooner. Otherwise, while continuing this path may indeed inflict significant infrastructural damage on Iran, in the future, the consequences of prolonging the war could strike blows to American hegemony — costs that would be far greater for the US than any other war expenses.

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Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Human chain at Golestan Palace shows support for Iran's cultural heritage

Iranica Desk

Amid growing concerns over recent threats against Iran's cultural heritage, a group of people and members of non-governmental organizations gathered on Saturday in the inner courtyard of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Golestan Palace to amplify public support for Iran's historical identity. Participants in the gathering, holding placards with protest messages, described the recent attacks on historical buildings, museums, and her-

itage sites as a clear assault on the historical memory and civilizational identity of nations, and called for a firm response from international institutions, according to IRNA. During the event, attendees formed a human chain in the heart of one of Iran's most important UNESCO-listed sites, demonstrating a tangible symbol of national solidarity in the protection of cultural heritage — an act that sent a clear message of social resolve to safeguard the country's identity-based assets. The participants also signed

a petition and a statement addressed to UNESCO, calling for the organization's official condemnation of these actions and for legal follow-up to halt attacks on Iran's cultural and historical sites. In remarks on the sidelines of the gathering, Maliheh Khalqi, the CEO of an NGO, emphasized the public nature of the movement, saying, "This gathering was held under the slogan 'I am a guardian of Iran's World Heritage,' and its aim was to declare practical, on-the-ground support for cultural heritage, especially World

Heritage sites." She added that public gatherings in support of cultural heritage would continue, and that efforts would be made to turn this demand into a broader public and international discourse. The gathering took place as cultural heritage activists view attacks on historical monuments not only as a threat to national assets, but also as a direct assault on humanity's shared heritage — an issue that underscores, more than ever, the urgent need for an immediate response from the international community.



● IRNA

Hafezieh leads tourist visits in Fars Province

Iranica Desk

The Deputy Head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of Fars Province announced that, even after the Nowruz holidays, which ended on April 2, holiday visitors' interest in connecting with the country's historical identity has not decreased. The tomb of Hafez (known as Hafezieh) remains the most popular tourist destination in spring 2026, attracting more than 16,000 visitors. Speaking to reporters,



● ichtn.ir

Heydar Zadehian-Nejad said that, to date, the tomb of Hafez, the celebrated 14th century Persian poet and lyricist, has ranked first with 16,547 visitors.

It is followed by the tomb of Sa'di, a renowned Persian poet and writer of the 13th century, with 9,512 visitors, the UNESCO World Heritage site of

Persepolis with 6,740 visitors, the Karim Khan Citadel (Zandiyeh Complex) with 5,732 visitors, and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Pasargad with 4,590 visitors. These sites have drawn the highest number of tourists, according to ISNA. He noted that on April 3, 1,332 people visited tomb of Hafez, 781 visited tomb of Sa'di, and 616 visited the Zandiyeh Complex. He added that Persepolis welcomed 622 tourists, while Pasargad hosted 380 visitors interested in

Iran's ancient history on the same day. Zadehian-Nejad emphasized the deep connection between society and historical heritage, describing this level of public interest in the last days of the holidays as evidence of the valuable place these monuments hold in the collective memory of Iranians. He added, "This strong presence shows that cultural heritage is not merely a tourist destination, but the anchor of our national identity." He concluded by stressing

that all heritage sites in the province remain fully prepared until the very last moment of visitors' stay, stating, "All of our colleagues are providing specialized services at maximum capacity to ensure peace of mind, comfort, and a lasting experience for guests who have chosen Fars as their travel destination." Earlier, Governor General of Fars Province Hosseinali Amiri, during a visit to the Karim Khan Citadel in Shiraz, highlighted Fars Province's distinguished status

in the country's tourism sector — especially during Nowruz. He mentioned that recent field visits had been made to the tombs of Hafez and Sa'di (each visited twice), as well as to Pasargad, Persepolis, Dasht-e Arjan, and other tourist destinations in the province. During these visits, in addition to cordial discussions with the public, artists, and those active in tourism and handicrafts, their issues and problems were reviewed, and, where necessary, appropriate orders were issued to resolve them.

ACL Elite:

Tractor on the verge of withdrawal amid security concerns



Tractor fullback Danial Esmailifard (11) is seen in action against Shabab Al Ahli in the AFC Champions League Elite in Dubai, UAE, on September 16, 2025.

● AFC

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Tractor is on the verge of withdrawing from the AFC Champions League Elite after refusing to visit Saudi Arabia for the knockout phase of the competition. The Iranian top-flight champion is scheduled to take on Emirati club Shabab Al Ahli in Jeddah in a single-legged last-16 tie of the continent's elite clubs tournament. The Asian Football Confederation had to reschedule the knockout round in the West zone, staging all remaining fixtures in Saudi Arabia, following the breakout of a military conflict between Iran and a U.S.-Israeli coalition on February 28. Iranian forces have been

attacking U.S. bases in the Middle East countries, including Saudi Arabia. Last week, Iran's Sports Ministry prohibited the country's national and club teams from visiting "hostile countries, where the security of Iranian athletes cannot be guaranteed," until further notice. Tractor has called on the Asian football governing body to change the host city of the last-16 game, citing "the expansion of the war to Saudi Arabia and the refusal of some foreign players to travel to the country." The AFC, however, has reportedly told the club that it understands the situation of Tractor as a force majeure, but there is no possibility of changing the host country with the last-16 round less than 10 days

away. The AFC insists that if the Iranian team does not show up for the game against Shabab Al Ahli, the case will be referred to the competition's organizing committee, and the final decision will be made based on the regulations of this committee. With Tractor's refusal to fly to Jeddah looking certain, the Iranian club could face a potential fine and a two-year ban from all continental competitions. Tractor won five and lost one in eight games in the West zone's league stage, finishing third in the 12-team table with 17 points, while the Emirati champion stood sixth with 11 points. The two sides met on the opening day of the competition, playing to a 1-1 draw in Dubai last September.

Iran's domestic league players set for national training camp

Sports Desk

The Iranian national team players of the Persian Gulf Pro League will take part in a Team Melli training camp in northern Iran from April 14. Iran head coach Amir Qalenei has made the decision to make sure his players would retain their match fitness amid the domestic league's ongoing postponement. All Iranian top-flight matches have been called off since February 28, following the breakout of a military conflict between Iran and a US-Israeli coalition. Despite all domestic and international flights canceled in the country, the Iranian national team took an ex-



● VARZESH3

hausting road trip to Antalya, Turkey, for a couple of friendly games in the latest FIFA international break. Team Melli fell to a 2-1 loss to Nigeria on March 27, before bouncing back to hammer Costa Rica 5-0 four days later.

The upcoming training camp will be part of Iran's preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be cohosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada from June 11. Iran is set to kick off its Group G campaign against

New Zealand at the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, California, on June 16, before facing Belgium at the same venue five days later. The final round of the group fixtures will see Iran take on Egypt in Seattle, Washington, on June 26. Iranian Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali said on Friday that the Football Federations of Iran and Turkey are in talks over a friendly game between the two national teams ahead of the global showpiece in North America. However, questions still remain regarding Iran's World Cup participation after Donyamali said that the country's National Security Council "will make a final call on the matter." Last week, the Sports Ministry prohibited all Iranian teams and athletes from visiting "adversary countries" for safety reasons amid the ongoing war in the region.

Saravi, Dorostkar among Asian wrestling's best in 2025

Sports Desk

The Asian Wrestling Council named Iran's Mohammad-Hadi Saravi as the continent's best Greco-Roman in 2025. Saravi's compatriot Pejman Dorostkar, meanwhile, was picked as the best freestyle head coach after steering the Iranian national squad to the world and Asian team titles last year. Reigning Olympic champion Saravi proved to be the wrestler to beat in the 97kg category last year, posting a 10-0 record en route to

gold medals at three major tournaments, including the world title in September. He opened the international season with a dominant run at the Asian Championships in March, claiming three superiority victories without conceding a single point to secure the third continental gold of his career. Saravi then defeated Russia's Artur Sargsian, competing as a neutral athlete, 3-1 in the final in Zagreb to claim his second world gold after his 2021 triumph, before rounding out the season with a 5-1 final victory over



Iran's Pejman Dorostkar (L) and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi were named among the best in Asian wrestling in 2025.

● IAWFIR

Azerbaijan's Murad Ahmadiyev at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November. The gold-laden season earned Saravi a nomination for the UWW Most Domi-

nant Greco-Roman Wrestler of 2025 award, though he ultimately lost out to fellow Iranian world and Olympic champion Saeid Esmaili.

Iran's UN envoy raps strikes on petchem sites, bridges as war crimes

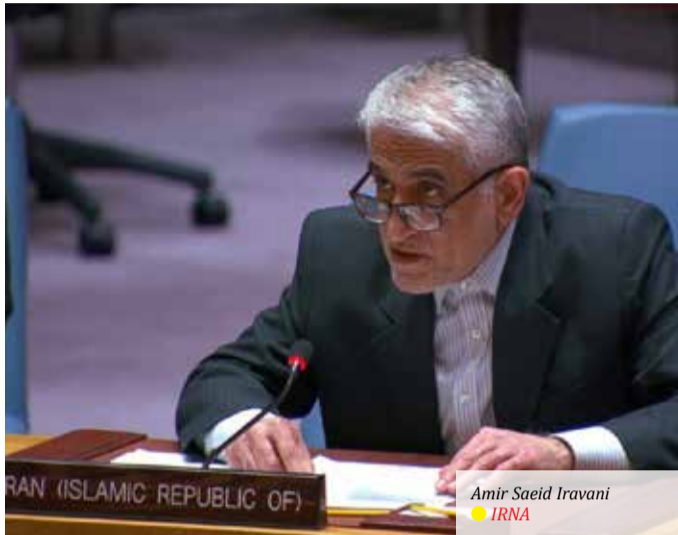
Economy Desk

Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations has lodged a strong protest with the international body, denouncing recent US and Israeli attacks on a major bridge in Karaj and petrochemical facilities in southwestern Iran as "war crimes" and "state terrorism."

In a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the rotating president of the UN Security Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani wrote that the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, including power, water, and energy systems, constitutes clear war crimes and state-sponsored terrorism designed to instill fear and cause severe harm to civilian populations.

"Such horrific and barbaric actions constitute a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and demonstrate the criminal intent of the perpetrators to inflict widespread suffering on civilian populations," IRNA quoted Iravani as stating in the letter.

The attacks on Saturday hit several companies operating in the Mahshahr Petrochemical Special Economic Zone in Khuzestan Province. According to the



Amir Saeid Iravani
● IRNA

zone's public relations office, fires at several petrochemical companies were fully contained and extinguished.

Companies damaged in the assault include Fajr 1 and 2, Karun, Razi, and Imam Khomeini Port. According to the deputy governor of Khuzestan, five people were killed in the attack. The US and the Zionist regime launched their aggression against the country on Feb. 28, with civilian targets and infrastructure among the primary sites struck.

Last week, part of the B1 bridge in Karaj — the tallest bridge in West Asia — was destroyed in the attack.

Condemning the attacks on

civilian infrastructure, Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development, Farzaneh Sadegh, emphasized that the destruction would not diminish Iranian engineers' expertise and pride. "Destruction of bridges and infrastructure in various transportation sectors, whether in aviation or roads, may cause damages and reconstruction costs, but this destruction cannot affect the knowledge and pride of Iranian engineers," the minister said Sunday. "We have seen an example of this capability in the Karaj northern bypass highway bridge in Alborz Province, which was designed and built from scratch by proud Iranian engineers."

Industry group says steel output holds steady despite strikes

Economy Desk

A spokesperson for Iran's House of Industry, Mining and Trade said the production process, including steel output, will continue despite damage to major industrial facilities in American-Zionist attacks, citing the proper distribution of production capacities across the country and the localization of industries.

Rouhollah Latifi, spokesperson for the Trade Promotion Commission, condemned the American-Zionist attacks on industrial and production infrastructure in an exclusive interview with IRNA, stating that significant capacities exist in steel, bridge construction, tunnels, petrochemicals, and other sectors.

"Iran annually produces high volumes of iron ore, pellets, and concentrate, and large units such as Mobarakeh Steel and Khuzestan Steel exist — they will not remain idle, and the country's capacities remain active," Latifi said.

The two listed companies, Mobarakeh Steel in the central province of Isfahan and Khuzestan Steel in the southwestern Khuzestan Province, which are owned by shareholders, were hit multiple times by the American-Zionist enemy during the war that began on February 28. Latifi described the recent attacks on industrial and produc-

tion infrastructure as a clear violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions.

Possibility of quick return to global market

He emphasized that in recent years, Iran has had annual steel exports of \$6-7 billion, adding that with the end of the war and the lifting of sanctions, there is potential for rapid reconstruction of facilities and a return to the global market.

ed value and complete the production chain to final products." Latifi stated that despite more than four decades of sanctions pressure, Iran has achieved domestic capabilities, specialized human resources, and export capacity, and this path will be repeated with increased intensity as restrictions ease.

Latifi also said that attacks on civilian targets, including schools, critical infrastructure, factories, bridges, power plants,



● IRNA

"Steel is not the only current-earning sector," Latifi noted. "Steel-dependent industries and other sectors such as automotive and machinery manufacturing also benefit from this chain. With reduced sanctions and the import of required machinery, there is potential to convert raw iron ore and concentrate sales into higher add-

and power transmission centers, violate the four Geneva Conventions and international law.

"The actions are carried out with the aim of pressuring people's lives and weakening the country's economic power, demonstrating a departure from human and legal frameworks," he said.

Nowruz box office draws 31,000 viewers despite wartime constraints



● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's cinemas sold about \$17,100 worth of tickets to more than 31,000 moviegoers during the Nowruz holidays, official data from the Cinema Management and Screening System (SAMFA) showed, as theaters operated under wartime constraints.

The New Year slate, running through April 4, unfolded in markedly different conditions from post-pandemic seasons, with fewer titles on release and reduced footfall. Even so, the turnout was "notable" given the circumstances, industry figures indicated, ISNA reported.

Four holiday releases led the market. 'Midnight' by Mohammad Hossein Mahdavian topped the chart, drawing over 19,600 viewers and grossing about \$10,700. 'Gambler' by Mohsen Bahari followed with more than 5,300 admissions and roughly \$3,000 in sales. 'Paradise for Criminals,' directed by Masoud Jafari Joza-

ni, logged around 3,200 viewers and about \$1,700, while 'Line of Rescue' by Vahid Mousaian attracted close to 2,900 viewers and generated roughly \$1,600.

Cinemas reopened on March 16, allowing several holdover titles to remain on screen alongside the new releases. Those earlier films drew about 40,000 viewers and brought in more than \$11,400 over the same period.

Exhibitors have rolled out evening programs from 6 p.m. at select venues near major public squares, aiming to "draw in" audiences before nightly gatherings in the streets. The strategy has helped sustain attendance as operators adjust to a tighter slate and shifting viewing patterns.

Other titles currently screening include 'Nilu's Visage,' 'Ahmad,' 'The Electrical Girl,' and animated features 'The Legend of Sepehr,' 'Juliet and the King,' and 'Queen Alishon,' maintaining a diverse lineup across the country.

Iran's ancient roots trace back 450,000 years

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran stands among the world's oldest centers of human settlement, with archaeological evidence indicating Neanderthal habitation dating back 450,000 years, cultural heritage expert Jalil Golshan Baqfi said, stressing the country's early role in shaping civilization and imperial governance. Drawing on excavation findings across the Iranian plateau, Golshan Baqfi described Iran as a historic "crossroads" linking East and West since the earliest phases of human presence, showing a civilizational depth that places it at the forefront of early societal development, IRNA reported.

He highlighted the rise of the Achaemenid Empire as the world's first structured empire, spanning territories from Central Asia to parts of Greece and Egypt. Its administrative order and political reach marked a decisive shift in governance models. Early efforts to link two seas during the Achaemenid period, evidenced by inscriptions in Egypt, were described as a "precursor" to later canal-building initiatives.

Golshan Baqfi pointed to the reign of Cyrus the Great as a hallmark of inclusive statecraft, citing policies that upheld religious freedom and the "practice" of diverse rites. The Cyrus Cylinder, widely regarded as an ear-

ly charter of human rights, emphasized coexistence and social harmony.

He added that during the Sassanian era, Iran reached a civilizational "zenith," with advances in architecture and engineering later influencing early Islamic structures. The transfer of knowledge

and technical expertise, he said, left a lasting imprint on mosque design and broader Islamic architectural traditions.

"Iran laid the foundations of imperial order and cultural exchange," he said, describing its legacy as enduring and globally significant.



A view of the excavated remains of a Neanderthal-era human skeleton discovered at an archaeological site in Iran, seen partially embedded in sediment with rib bones exposed.
● IRNA

Nationwide theater event honors Minab students

Arts & Culture Desk

A nationwide children's theater initiative titled 'For What Sin?' has been staged across 21 provinces since April 3 to commemorate students from Minab, as coordinated performances bring artists together in a display of cultural solidarity. The performances coincide with the 40th day since the students were killed in an airstrike on

February 28, 2026, at the Shajareh Tayyebah girls' school in the southern city of Minab, ISNA reported. Mounted under the 'Empathetic Iran' cultural campaign, the program brings together youth theater troupes to perform a single script in a coordinated run lasting through April 20. Around 220 shows by 21 selected groups are being staged in cities nationwide, including at public

gathering points during evening hours, translating collective grief into a shared artistic narrative.

The productions frame the "innocence" of the victims while amplifying public solidarity with their families. Turnout has been robust, with audiences gathering in large numbers and engaging with the performances in what organizers describe as a "unifying" atmosphere.



● ISNA