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Music album ‘Minab Angels’ unveiled, honoring schoolchildren killed in strike

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Tehran, Washington hold high-stakes peace talks in Islamabad

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The combo shows Iran’s Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (left photo) shake hands with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif who also meets with US Vice President JD Vance (right photo) in Islamabad, Pakistan ahead of Iranian-US talks on April 11, 2026.
AFP

Pakistan emerges as sole viable mediator between Tehran, Washington

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

After forty days of conflict between Iran on one side and the United States and Israel on the other had reached a flashpoint for the region and the world, Pakistan ultimately managed to bring around both parties to agree to a cease-fire and resume talks under its hosting. Pakistan is stepping into the mediator role at a time when the traditional intermediary, Oman, has been unable to step up to the plate due to its involvement in the recent war. In an interview with Amin Rezaeinejad, Iran Daily has zeroed in on Islamabad's capabilities and shortcomings in fulfilling this role. According to him, while Pakistan remains the only viable option for mediation—both in terms of track record and current circumstances—it lacks the effective components needed to bring the negotiations to fruition.

Amin Rezaeinejad

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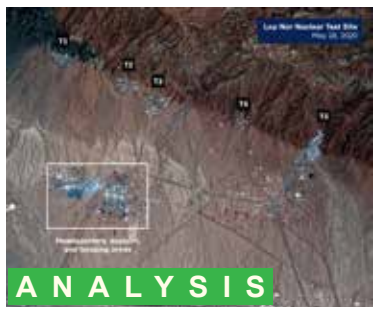

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Tehran, Washington hold high-stakes peace talks in Islamabad

International Desk

Senior Iranian and American officials held a "face-to-face" meeting on Saturday in Islamabad for the highest-level talks between Tehran and Washington in half a century as they sought to bring an end to their six-week conflict.

The talks followed a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire agreement which temporarily ended an unprovoked aggression by the US and the Israeli regime against Iran, which began on February 28.

Strikes by the US and Israel have targeted Iran's military sites, medical centers, schools, universities and many other civilian structures.

The aggression has claimed the lives of thousands of Iranians and inflicted severe damage to the country's infrastructure. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as well as many military officials have been martyred in the attacks.

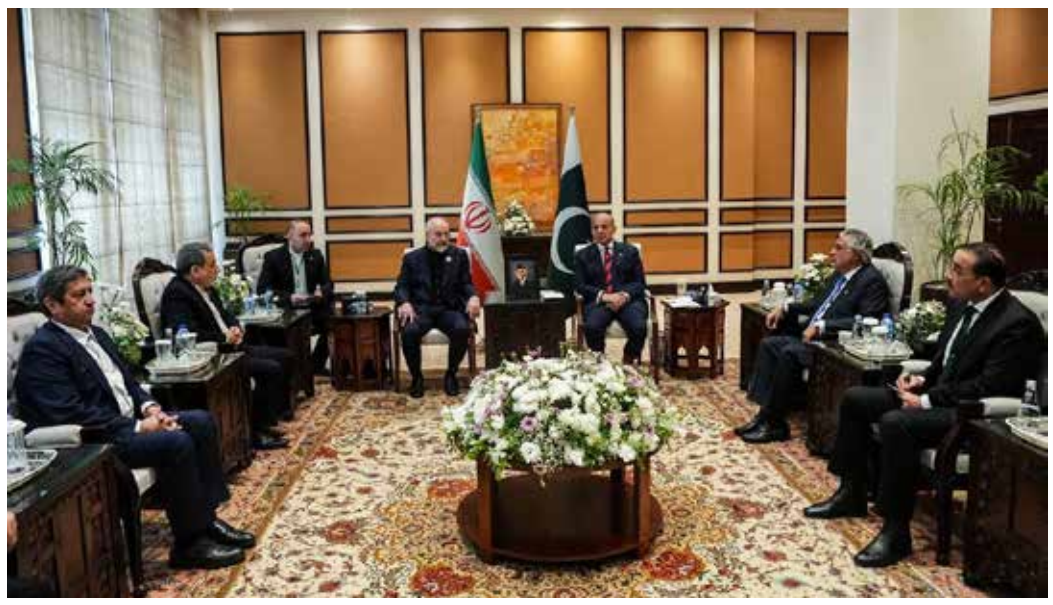
The negotiations in Islamabad were held between US Vice President JD Vance, special envoy Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, and Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi after they met separately with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Iran's 10-point proposal

The talks followed a morning of mediation by Pakistani prime minister as Tehran laid down its red lines that it said Washington must accept before the face-to-face talks could take place.

On Friday, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi said the negotiations will be based on a 10-point ceasefire plan proposed by Iran.

According to the statement issued by Iran's top security body on Wednesday, the US has agreed to the 10-point proposal that fundamentally commits Washington to no new aggression against Iran, continued Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz, acceptance of uranium enrichment, removal of all primary sanctions, removal of all secondary sanctions, termination of all anti-Iran UN Security Council resolutions, termination of all anti-Iran IAEA Board of Governors resolutions, payment of compensation to Iran, withdrawal of US forces from the region and cessation of war on all fronts, including against the Islamic Resistance of Lebanon.



Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (4th L) holds talks with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (3rd R) in Islamabad, Pakistan, on April 11, 2026.
IRNA

However, Israel and the US have said the Lebanon campaign is not part of the Iran-US ceasefire.

Authority over Strait of Hormuz

Tehran's agenda includes the acknowledgment of its authority over the narrow Strait of Hormuz, where it aims to collect transit fees and control access. The strait is a chokepoint for about 20% of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments.

Disruption to energy supplies has fed inflation and slowed the global economy, with an impact expected to last for months even if negotiators succeed in reopening the strait.

US President Donald Trump ahead of the meeting engaged in provocative social media posts, suggesting that the US energy sector will benefit from Iran effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz to oil and natural gas tankers.

The Iranian delegation arrived on Friday dressed in black in mourning for Ayatollah Khamenei and other Iranians martyred in the war. They carried shoes and bags of some of the students killed during a US bombing of a school in the southern city of Minab.

The face-to-face negotiations were the highest-level US-Iran talks since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the first direct talks since 2015, when they reached a deal on Iran's nuclear program.

Trump scrapped the nuclear deal in 2018 during his first term in office.

Pakistan emerges as ...

IRAN DAILY: Given Pakistan's record of relations with Iran Page 1 **and the United States, what is Pakistan's most significant advantage in assuming the role of mediator?**

REZAEINEJAD: Pakistan's mediation efforts hinge on its track record in diplomacy rather than solely on its relationship with Iran and the United States. Pakistan has previously stepped in as a mediator between the United States and China. Consequently, it is regarded favorably by Washington, having once pulled off a successful mediation for that country, while also sharing a border with Iran, whose leadership holds Pakistan in particular regard. Also, from the standpoint of modern issues and contemporary matters, the unsuccessful experience with Oman's mediation made it necessary to change mediators. Pakistan represents Iran in the United States and the Iranian Interests Section in Washington being under Pakistani oversight, while the country's army, which is playing a role in this mediation, maintains strong ties with the United States. These are altogether factors that make Pakistan a viable option for mediation both from a historical and contemporary standpoint.

What is the most significant obstacle Pakistan will face along this path: Israeli pressure on Washington, domestic opposition within Iran, or Pakistan's limited tools for enforcing commitments?

A mediator is generally expected to share tangible common interests with both parties, such that if those shared interests were to be compromised, the relationship between the mediating country and the conflicting parties could be disrupted. Pakistan is not seen as having such geopolitical and interest-based entanglement with Iran and the United States. Consequently, in terms of political weight, it is not regarded as a highly reliable country for successful mediation. For instance, Pakistan could not effectively persuade Washington to lean on its ally, the Israeli regime, to halt attacks on Lebanon in order for negotiations to commence. Pakistan's initial experience has shown that, due to its lack of intertwined and complex interests with both sides, it may not be able to carry through successfully in this mediation. It is considered a good option for mediation given that no alternative is available for this matter. However, whether it can succeed depends on that entanglement of interests, which it lacks.

From a geopolitical standpoint, what advantages does Pakistan hold over Oman? Could Pakistan's closeness to China (in the form of CPEC) serve as leverage to pressure the United States or as a guarantee for Iran?

No, the issue of CPEC and the relationship between Pakistan and China is not closely tied to this mediation. From a geopolitical perspective, Pakistan does not hold an advantage over Oman, nor can this be cited as a strength. Generally speaking, because no other mediator is available and Oman's experience has fallen short, Pakistan is considered a suitable option. Otherwise, it holds no particular advantage over other alternatives.

How do you see the outlook for Iran-US talks with Pakistan's mediation, and what is the likelihood of conflict resuming?

Given the history of negotiations with the United States in recent years, it appears that Washington is primarily seeking to buy time in order to extricate itself from the Iran deadlock without conceding ground, and that these two weeks could potentially kick off an extension of the ceasefire period and provide additional time to reconfigure and adjust its defensive posture in the region in preparation for potential action. A clear outlook for the negotiations does not appear to be on the horizon, based on signals coming out of the United States, unless Iran chooses to back down again, as it did with the JCPOA, in which case it would once again face the fate and consequences of that agreement. Yet, it is unlikely that conflict will erupt in the near term as the United States, under current circumstances, is not in a position to sustain further escalation and efforts are being directed toward dragging out negotiations and prolonging the ceasefire process. A quick resumption of hostilities is unlikely unless the Israeli regime seeks it, given that Netanyahu has limited time and is once again approaching legal proceedings, for whom wartime conditions represent a favorable scenario.

Gov't spox says Iran negotiates with 'finger on the trigger'

VP urges US to put 'America First' over 'Israel First'

International Desk

Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani in remarks before Iran-US talks in Islamabad said, "We will negotiate with our finger on the trigger" as Tehran does not trust Washington.

Mohajerani said that dispatching a diplomatic team led by the Parliament speaker demonstrates Iran's resolve for dialogue. However, she said, "As the president has said, we will negotiate with our finger on the trigger. While we are open to talks, we do not trust the other side."

Mohajerani underlined that the Islamic Republic will not retreat from its rights in the negotiations which followed 40 days of aggression by the US and the Israeli regime against Iran.

First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref in a message on X said that, "If we negotiate in Islamabad with representatives of 'America First,' reaching a deal beneficial to the world is possible. But if we face representatives of 'Israel First,' no agreement will be reached.

In that case, the Islamic Republic will be forced to continue its defense even more strongly than before, and the world will face "greater costs", he said.

Fatemeh Mohajerani
IRNA

Ali Akbar Velayati, former foreign minister, also commented on the negotiations in Islamabad, saying that, "Today's powerful diplomacy is testament to safeguarding regional stability under the umbrella of Iran's national authority."

Former foreign minister Mohmmad Javad Zarid also took to X, saying that Iran demonstrated its seriousness by dispatching its most authoritative and capable team to Islamabad.

"Iran showed seriousness by sending its most authoritative & capable team to Islamabad despite repeated US betrayals. Let's hope that beyond the bluster, Trump sees the only way out of his self-made quagmire: Stop heeding THE WANTED & accomplices. Strike a deal while he still can," Zarif said.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

Protracted war on Iran could slash global growth by 1 point: *WB*

Economy Desk

A prolonged US-Israeli war against Iran would seriously damage global economic growth and price stability, with the reduction in economic growth potentially reaching one percentage point, according to World Bank President Ajay Banga.

According to Tasnim news agency, Banga announced that war in West Asia could reduce global economic growth and have widespread consequences, even if the announced ceasefire remains in place.

Banga added that in a base scenario with an early end to the war, global economic growth would decrease by 0.3 to 0.4 percentage points (pp), but if conflicts continue, this reduction could reach one percentage point. He also predicted that the inflation rate may increase by 200 to 300 basis points (bp), and if the war continues, this figure could rise by up to 0.9 percentage points more.

After 40 days of US-Israeli war against Iran that began on February 28, Iran and the United States announced a 15-day ceasefire early Wednesday morning with Pakistan's mediation.

Based on World Bank estimates, economic growth in emerging markets and developing countries in 2026 will decrease to 3.65%, down from the 4% predicted in October. In a pessimistic scenario with a prolonged war, growth could fall to 2.6%. The inflation rate in these countries for 2026 is projected at about 4.9%, a 3% increase from the previous estimate, and could reach 6.7% in a severe scenario.

According to the report, the war, which has left thousands dead in the West Asian region, has caused a 50% increase in oil prices and disrupted supplies of oil, gas, fertilizer, helium and other commodities, while also affecting sectors such as tourism and air transport.

Referring to the fragility of the announced two-week ceasefire, the World Bank president said continued attacks between Iran and Israel show the situation remains unstable. "The key question is whether this ceasefire and the upcoming negotiations will lead to a lasting peace and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz," he said.

Banga further stated that if negotiations fail and hostilities resume, "Will there be an even larger or longer-term impact on energy infrastructure?"

Following initial US and Israeli air strikes in February, Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint through which approximately one-fifth of global oil supplies transit.

8 energy facilities face output disruptions

At least eight energy facilities in the Persian Gulf region have faced serious and long-term problems as a result of the war against Iran.

In a note published by Natasha Kanwa, head of global commodities research at JPMorgan Investment Bank, more than 60% of energy infrastructure across the Persian Gulf has been targeted by drone and missile attacks. While most of these attacks do not cause long-term disruptions, at least eight energy facilities have faced serious and long-term problems.

The US Energy Information Administration announced that Middle Eastern producers halted approximately 7.5 million barrels per day of their crude oil production in March, and this figure is expected to reach 9.1 million barrels per day in April.

Analysts predict that damage to global oil production from the Iran war will leave the market facing a supply shortage this year, whereas a large supply surplus had previously been forecast.

According to Tasnim news agency, citing Reuters, oil prices have declined and registered their largest weekly drop since 2023 ahead of the start of talks between Iran and the US on Saturday.

Futures prices for oil remained around $100 per barrel amid continued attacks, restrictions on oil flow from the Strait of Hormuz, and concerns about disruptions to Saudi oil supplies, while spot market prices reached their highest levels.

Rising maritime transportation costs

Experts also state that the economic situation of countries around the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman could affect shipping costs. If a country's economy is damaged by war, this could lead to reduced trade and consequently lower shipping costs.

In this regard, Masoud Polmeh, secretary-general of the Shipping Association and Related Industries, told IRNA, "Given that since the start of this war, the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman have been declared a 'war zone,' a charge called WAR RISK SURCHARGE has been added to bulk and container shipping."

He stated, "The cost of shipping vessels in the region, apart from the increases in insurance costs and war risk charges, has in some cases grown by more than three times, and this increase not only affects countries located within this zone, but also generally impacts each of the activities carried out in this area."

Recalling that fuel rates account for about 30% of vessels' current costs and transport operations, Polmeh stressed, "Recent developments in both the shipping and energy sectors have caused us to witness an increase equivalent to 100% in freight rates."

QatarEnergy's liquefied natural gas (LNG) production facilities, amid the US-Israeli war on Iran, in Ras Laffan Industrial City, Qatar March 2, 2026.
REUTERS

India permits Iranian oil tankers to berth for Reliance, sources say

India's shipping ministry has granted special permission to four vessels carrying Iranian oil - as requested by Reliance Industries - to berth at the western port of Sikka, three industry sources said, reported by Reuters.

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, has not received a cargo from Tehran since May 2019 following US pressure not to buy Iranian crude.

However, the US last month temporarily waived sanctions on the purchase of Iranian oil at sea to ease oil prices.

The waiver is due to expire on April 19.

India's oil ministry, shipping ministry and Reliance did not respond to requests for comment.

Two million barrels of Iranian crude reached India under the temporary US sanctions waiver, TankerTrackers data showed Friday.

Iranian oil is often transported by a shadow fleet of vessels that lack internationally recognized insurance and safety certifications. But this requires special permission from the government as exemptions are required under Indian rules for the berthing of ships.

One of the sources said the shipping ministry has granted a special one-time exemption to vessels requested by Reliance, operator of the world's biggest refining complex, due to the emergency situation created by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Apart from Comoros-flagged aframax Kaviz and Curacao-flagged very large crude carrier (VLCC) Lenore, permission has been granted to Iran-flagged VLCCs Felicity and Hedy, a second source said.

All four US-sanctioned vessels are more than 20 years old. Each VLCC supertanker can carry a maximum of 2 million barrels of oil.

India typically requires tankers that are more than 20 years old to have seaworthiness certification from a member of the industry's leading body, the International Association of Classification Societies, or an entity authorized by India's maritime administration.

The Hedy has been positioned near Chabahar port since April 1 and Felicity was seen near Chabahar since April 3, according to analysis from US advocacy group United Against Nuclear Iran, which monitors Iran-related tanker traffic through ship and satellite tracking.

The Kaviz exited the Persian Gulf on Thursday, while the Lenore loaded crude from Iran's Kharg Island on March 20, UANI senior adviser Charlie Brown said.

However, another source said, despite the grant of permission, it was not certain Reliance would process Iranian oil, as it wants to ensure that transactions are sanctions-compliant and are in line with Indian rules.

Indian Oil Corp, the country's top refiner, has purchased Iranian oil carried in the sanctioned tanker Jaya, ship tracking data shows.

SATBA: Renewables capacity posts 4,500 MW rise under Pezeshkian

IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's renewable energy capacity has increased 3.5-fold to 4,500 megawatts under President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration, which took office in late July 2024, a senior energy official said at a ceremony commissioning solar power plants in Bardaskan, northeastern Khorasan Razavi.

According to ISNA, Alireza Parandeh Motlag, deputy for technical and engineering affairs at Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), made the announcement during the inauguration of solar power facilities in the northeastern city.

"The country's total capacity has risen from 1,200 megawatts to 4,500 megawatts, increasing 3.5-fold during the 14th government," Parandeh Motlag said.

"At the beginning of the 14th government, the country's total renewable power plant capacity was about 1,200 megawatts," he added. "This figure has now reached 4,500 megawatts, reflecting sustained efforts and cooperation among all relevant agencies."

Parandeh Motlag noted that while 3,000 megawatts of solar power plants were connected to the grid last year, the organization plans to install an additional 2,500 megawatts in the first quarter of the current Iranian year, which began on March 21, despite all international restrictions and pressures. He projected that total renewable energy capacity would reach 11,000 megawatts by the end of summer.

"The target has been set for renewable energy's share in the country's energy mix to exceed 10 percent during this government," Parandeh Motlag said. "Khorasan (Razavi) provinces, with its high potential for solar and wind energy, will play a key role in achieving this goal, and at least 1,000 megawatts of wind power plants are expected to be installed in the province."

AUCTION SJSCO. B140501

Sirjan Jahan Steel Company is pleased to announce the sale and export of 10,000 tons **STEEL BILLET** (Size 150 x 150 mm), with the possibility of increasing the contract amount to 30,000 tons on basis of FOB Bandar Abbas according to INCOTERMS 2020. Interested applicants are hereby invited to obtain the tender documents by visiting the official website of Sirjan Jahan Steel Company at sjsco.ir, through the Sales and customer portal, Tender and Foreign Tender section.
All documentation will be provided electronically.
All bids on conformity to tender instruction should be submitted no later than **Monday, April 20, 2026.**

For more information, please contact us at:
Tel: +2186084642

AUCTION SJSCO. D140501

Sirjan Jahan Steel Company is pleased to announce the sale and export of 25,000 tons **DIRECT REDUCTED IRON (DRI)**, with the option to increase the contract quantity by up to 20% on basis of FAS at the Buyer's warehouse in Bandar Abbas, IRAN (Other ports are negotiable) according to INCOTERMS 2020. Interested applicants are hereby invited to obtain the tender documents by visiting the official website of Sirjan Jahan Steel Company at sjsco.ir, through the Sales and customer portal, Tender and Foreign Tender section.
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Satellite imagery analysis of China's alleged 2020 nuclear test at Lop Nur

By Joseph Rodgers & Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.
Fellows with the Center for Strategic and International Studies

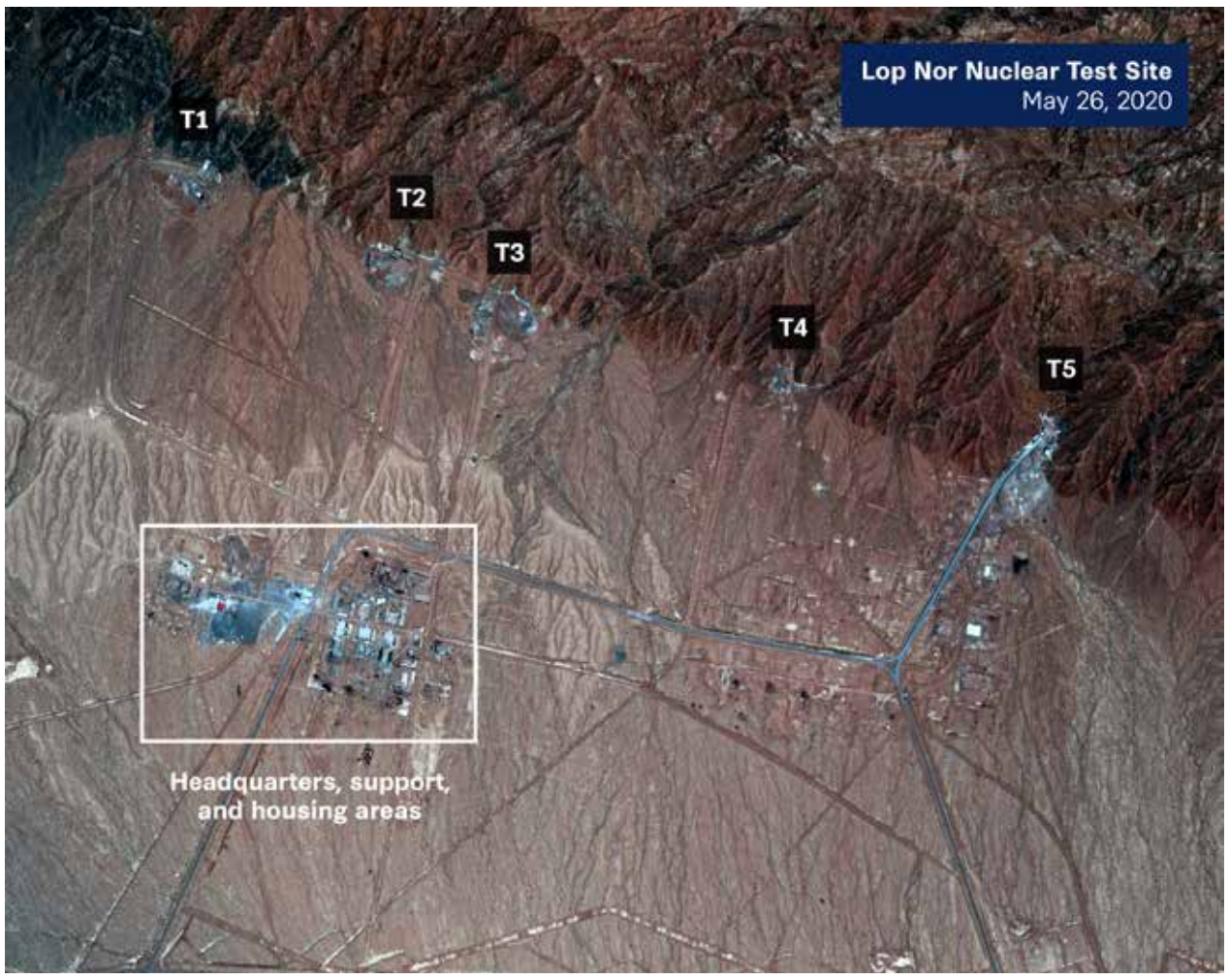
ANALYSIS

On February 6, the United States Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security Thomas DiNanno accused China of conducting nuclear weapons tests that achieved supercritical yields, including one test on June 22, 2020. While this is not the first time that the United States has expressed concern about China's nuclear testing activities, DiNanno's February 6 statements at the UN Conference on Disarmament contained significantly more detail than previous US statements about Chinese nuclear testing.

The US statement arrives four months after President Donald Trump stated that the United States would "start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis" as China and Russia in a Truth Social post. This follows a multiyear trend of escalating rhetoric regarding testing activities. In 2019, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency accused Russia of "probably" conducting low-yield nuclear tests in violation of their moratorium. The annual US Department of State Arms Control Verification and Compliance report has consistently stated that Russia has not adhered to its nuclear testing moratorium. The compliance report has raised concerns about Russian noncompliance and Chinese activity at Lop Nur, China's nuclear test site, since 2019.

The United States claims that Russia and China are both conducting low-yield nuclear tests in deep underground tunnels. Specifically, DiNanno mentioned that China has used "decoupling" to reduce the detectability of its nuclear tests. A decoupling experiment detonates a nuclear weapon in a large underground cavern — typically a salt dome. The blast's explosive force reverberates through the cavern, muffling and reducing its seismic signature.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union conducted decoupling experiments prior to the nuclear testing moratorium. For example, the United States detonated the Sterling nuclear test to explore decoupling in the Tatum Salt Dome near Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Because Lop Nur is built into a salt lake, the environment is geologically suited for such activities. However, the technical ground truth of what happened at Lop Nur on June 22, 2020, is difficult to verify.



VANTOR/CSIS

Attempts at open-source verification

While commercially available imagery of Lop Nur during this timeframe is limited, CSIS analyzed Vantor images from March 26, 2020, and June 25, 2020, of the northern tunnel test area. Before China's testing moratoria, China allegedly conducted underground nuclear tests with explosive yields of less than 10 kilotons in this area. Analysts have noted significant activity at Tunnel 5 since 2020. CSIS imagery analysis of Lop Nur's northern test tunnel area, including Tunnel 5, saw no significant activity or changes between March 26, 2020, and June 25, 2020. However, Lop Nur is a large facility. It is possible that China conducted an underground nuclear test at another area. It is also possible that the testing did indeed take place at this tunnel, and there are no optical indicators in these two images.

The satellite imagery did not provide any conclusive findings to support or disprove the US allegations. Furthermore, the CSIS Project on Nuclear Issues also searched several geologic databases to determine whether there were any indicators of seismic activity around Lop Nur on June 22, 2020. No signatures of any seismic events at the Lop Nur site were found. While the US Geological Survey did record a magnitude 4.1 seismic event at 6:38 p.m. local time on June 22, the epicenter was approximately 200 kilometers away at a depth of 10 kilometers — making it unlikely to be related to activity at the test site. To further confirm this point, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Executive Secretary Robert Floyd issued a statement on February 6, saying:

"The CTBTO's International Monitoring System (IMS) is capable of detecting nuclear test explosions with a yield equivalent to or greater than approximately 500 tonnes of TNT… Regarding reports of possible nuclear tests with yields in the hundreds of tonnes, on 22 June 2020, the CTBTO's IMS did not detect any event consistent with the characteristics of a nuclear weapon test explosion at that time. Subsequent, more detailed analyses have not altered that determination."

CSIS's analysis yielded no indicators of a nuclear test on June 22, 2020. If the US claims are true, China conducted a covert decoupling test. They would have gone to extensive effort to hide optical and seismic signatures. While satellite imagery and seismology are inconclusive in the open source, the United States intelligence community has access to many more sources of data.

Another significant part of the problem in deciphering whether China "cheated" is the lack of an international agreement on what constitutes a nuclear test. Even the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) lacks an agreed-upon definition. The United States has long championed a "zero-yield" interpretation, meaning no experiment should produce a self-sustaining chain reaction. However, in practice, this remains more of a political distinction than a purely technical one. Defining the line between spontaneous fission in a subcritical mass and a self-sustaining chain reaction is a difficult technical challenge, one that the international community chose to leave undefined in the CTBT.

Why test? Four possible explanations

If China did indeed cross the supercritical threshold on June 22, 2020, then the most important question is why. What would China stand to gain from very low-yield, decoupled nuclear tests? There are at least four possible explanations.

1. To enhance safety and security: The United States conducted a series of very low-yield nuclear tests to enhance

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VANTOR/CSIS

VANTOR/CSIS

the safety and security of our weapons designs. For example, Project 56, Project 57, and Project 58 shot series all sought to ensure the safety and security of the US stockpile. Most of these tests were designed to ensure that our weapons are one point safe, ensuring that if one conventional explosive detonates inside the warhead, then it will not spark a chain reaction and cause the warhead to go off. China may be pursuing similar technical assurances for its modernizing arsenal. If China is conducting safety and security experiments in a decoupled manner, it is trying to hide them.

2. To enhance weapons designs: The 2025 China Military Power Report from the US Department of Defense states that China "is probably pursuing nuclear weapons with yields below 10 kilotons," allowing for more flexible options in a regional conflict. Using a low-yield weapon on the battlefield could force adversaries to make a difficult choice — escalate dramatically with higher-yield weapons or back down. Alternatively, China may want to conduct more nuclear tests to create smaller warheads. Miniaturization of warhead technology could allow China to fit more warheads on missiles, enhancing their ability to deploy a technology called multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV). It is worth noting that China only conducted 64 nuclear tests before its alleged moratorium. If China wants to push warhead design parameters, testing covertly would probably be beneficial for Chinese weaponeers.

3. To detect proliferation: If a country wanted to covertly develop a nuclear weapons program, decoupling experiments might be the best way to test a nuclear device without detection. Chinese weapons experts may have conducted a decoupling experiment to learn what the signatures of such an experiment look like. The US Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration conducted several experiments between 2021 and 2023 with conventional explosives to detect and characterize low-yield, evasively conducted underground nuclear explosions. Interestingly, some of those tests may have provided more conclusive evidence to support Undersecretary DiNanno's claims about China's nuclear testing. If these experiments provided electromagnetic or atmospheric signatures that better characterized data from China's June 22, 2020, test, then it might explain why the language in Undersecretary DiNanno's speech was so much more definitive than previous Department of State compliance reports.

4. Because it was an accident: The US nuclear testing history is full of accidents and failures. Most famously, the largest US nuclear test, Castle Bravo in 1954, had an explosive yield of 15 megatons, while its designers thought it would only yield 6 megatons. Several of the US safety tests also achieved unexpected yields. For example, the Coulomb-C test in the Project 58 shot series produced an unanticipated yield of 500 tons, forcing the evacuation of significant parts of Yucca Flats on December 6, 1957. Similarly, experiment 4 in Project 56 was a safety test that produced a slight unanticipated yield. It is possible that China conducted a safety test that accidentally produced a nuclear yield. In security studies, it is easy to assume malice, but the United States should not discount the role of incompetence.

Ending an era of ambiguity

Regardless of Chinese activities, the United States should not return to the era of full-scale explosive testing. Having conducted 1,054 nuclear tests between 1945 and 1992, the US possesses the most advanced data and computer modeling in the world. If the United States reopens the door to testing, its adversaries — who have far more to learn from nuclear physics than the United States does — will gain more than the United States will. Beyond the strategic rationale, widescale nuclear testing carries high costs. Legacy nuclear testing was expensive and included high environmental and humanitarian costs.

To move beyond the current test-for-test tit-for-tat rhetoric, the United States should consider the following policy pathways:

1. Establish a P5 nuclear testing transparency initiative: As the United States works with the P5 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), it should lead formal efforts to define nuclear testing. By negotiating a definition agreed to by the P5, the United States could fill a vital hole in the nonproliferation regime.

2. Formalize nuclear test site visit reciprocity: President Trump or senior administration leadership could propose a program of reciprocal site visits to Novaya Zemlya, Lop Nur, and the Nevada National Security Sites. These visits could be limited in scope but would provide assurance and transparency regarding nuclear testing behavior.

3. Restrain future nuclear testing: If the administration remains determined to test "on an equal basis" with its peers, the interagency should work toward an agreement where very small nuclear tests — perhaps below a 500-ton threshold — are permissible and transparently monitored. Alternatively, as other analysts have suggested, the international community could allow a caveat for tests strictly meant to enhance the safety and security of an arsenal. While this might slightly weaken the normative prohibition on testing, it is preferable to a world of unrestrained, secret, and escalatory nuclear explosions.

The article was first published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Three arms control proposals for post-New START world

By Joseph Rodgers & Doreen Horschig
Fellows with the Center for Strategic and International Studies

O P I N I O N

The expiration on February 5 of the New START treaty — the last arms control agreement between the United States and Russia — is indicative of a broader shift currently happening in nuclear policy. The international system is moving toward a fragmented and competitive multipolarity. Intensifying territorial disputes, unraveling alliance structures, and the steady erosion of international institutions raise questions about core assumptions of international relations. Nuclear policy analysts are beginning to question long-standing assumptions, including whether strategic stability is inherently good and whether arms racing is actually dangerous. By this, it means the overall concept of arms control is in question.

The types of traditional arms control that sought to quantitatively reduce the size of nuclear arsenals are now gone and unlikely to return. In the near term, a buildup of nuclear capabilities by China, Russia, and the United States seems almost inevitable. Without New START, the United States and Russia will likely upload or deploy more warheads to exceed the New START limit of 1,550 deployed warheads. The United States has already announced a new class of guided missile battleships, which the Navy stated would be equipped with the non-strategic nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile proposed during the first Trump administration, and Russia has reportedly tested a new nuclear-armed, nuclear-powered underwater drone. China continues the massive expansion of its nuclear arsenal. In this environment, arms control is not useless, but it may be different.

Arms control can still contribute to enhancing global security by creating meaningful guardrails that prevent the most dangerous pathways to nuclear use or limit certain types of weapons systems. To manage strategic competition in a multipolar world, arms control must reform itself. Here's a pragmatic starting point.

• Place no nuclear weapons in space: Modern civilization depends on space-based assets. Detonating a nuclear weapon in space could result in an electromagnetic pulse capable of crippling satellites that underpin global communication, finance, and navigation. Nuclear weapons in space serve no national interest; their use would cause indiscriminate and potentially global harm without providing any meaningful military advantage.

No country has placed a nuclear weapon in space yet. This reflects the long-standing recognition among nuclear-armed powers that the risks of such systems far outweigh any strategic benefits. But Russia is allegedly building a nuclear weapon to be placed in space, and China has tested fractional orbital bombardment systems. The United States also experimented with space-based nuclear technologies decades ago. While the Outer Space Treaty of 1964 already bans weapons of mass destruction from being placed in orbit, it would be worthwhile for nuclear-armed states to re-emphasize arms control that prohibits nuclear weapons from being placed in outer space. A clear, verifiable agreement banning nuclear weapons in space could reinforce this norm and reduce the risk of an arms race in space while reassuring all states of mutual restraint.

• Create greater transparency around nuclear testing activities: Since 2019, the US arms control compliance report has repeatedly raised concerns that Russia and China may be testing nuclear weapons at very low yields. In 2025, President Donald Trump said that the United States would resume nuclear testing on an "equal basis" with Russia and China. To make it even more ambiguous, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which prohibits nuclear testing, does not define what constitutes a nuclear test. (Many interpret the CTBT as being "zero yield," meaning it bans any type of nuclear test explosion that involves a self-sustaining fission chain reaction, irrespective of its yield. But in practice, countries interpret "zero yield" as not strictly forbidding the creation of nuclear fission yield during an experiment.) This problem of definition creates ambiguity and mistrust, leading to allegations that Russia and China may have different interpretations of the treaty. To bridge this gap, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, or P5, should seek to negotiate a verification regime and a common understanding of their respective moratoria on nuclear testing. Immediate steps could include convening a P5 working group to clarify definitions, discuss shared reporting practices, and identify measures that increase transparency without new treaty commitments.

• Ban AI-controlled nuclear launch authority: In 2024, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden agreed on the "need to maintain human control over the decision to use nuclear weapons". The United Kingdom and France have also said that they will maintain a human in the loop of nuclear decision-making. Russia, however, has resisted this trend, claiming that the use of AI technologies in the command and control of nuclear weapons is not verifiable. But if a human-in-the-loop is already the norm in several nuclear-armed states, an international ban on AI-only launch would only codify and reinforce existing practice rather than introduce radical new constraints. Issuing international statements and domestic policy guidance to ensure that AI should not make decisions to launch nuclear weapons should be an easy win for arms control and could help place meaningful guardrails on nuclear escalation dynamics.

Realism and hard power appear to dominate the current international system. Ensuring that major nuclear powers have effective nuclear deterrent capabilities will likely drive strategic competition soon. At the same time, arms control can put valuable limits and guardrails on competition, creating rules of the road and preventing the development of the most destabilizing technologies. These three arms control proposals can help move the international system toward a model of controlled multipolar competition.

The article first appeared on Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

THOMAS GAULKIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

> The types of traditional arms control that sought to quantitatively reduce the size of nuclear arsenals are now gone and unlikely to return. In the near term, a buildup of nuclear capabilities by China, Russia, and the United States seems almost inevitable. Without New START, the United States and Russia will likely upload or deploy more warheads to exceed the New START limit of 1,550 deployed warheads.

The photo shows an alarming tweet by US President Donald Trump just after his first win in the presidential elections.
X

Over 200 sports facilities damaged by US-Israeli aggression: *Sports Ministry*

Sports Desk

More than 200 sports facilities were damaged during the 40 days of the U.S.-Israeli aggression on Iran, the country's Sports Ministry announced.

As the sixth week of the military conflict came to a close with a two-week ceasefire in the early hours of Wednesday, widespread damage to the country's sports facilities has come to light, with many venues directly targeted or severely impacted.

The complete destruction of the iconic Azadi Indoor Hall in Tehran stands as the most bitter incident faced by Iran's sports community in the early days of the conflict. Around the same time, the Be'sat Sports Complex in southeastern Tehran was also attacked and sustained significant damage.

As the raids by the Israeli regime and U.S. forces continued, other sports facilities in the Iranian capital – including the Wrestling Federation headquarters, the National Football Center, and the federations for shooting, cycling, volleyball, hockey, tennis, and handball – were affected by the attacks. The Aftab-e Enqelab Stadium also suffered considerable destruction.

Beyond the capital, sports venues in other provinces were also struck. According to figures released by the Legal, Parliamentary, and Provincial Affairs Deputy of the Ministry of Sport and Youth, sports infrastructure in 17 provinces has come under attack and sustained damage.

A total of 203 sports facilities – including indoor halls, swimming pools, artificial turf fields, and administrative buildings – have been damaged in the attacks, with the extent of destruction estimated between 2% and 100%.

Based on assessments, Tehran, Isfahan, Kurdistan, and Markazi provinces experienced the highest levels of destruction to their sports complexes and facilities.

Following an order from Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali, plans have been approved for the redesign and reconstruction of the entirely destroyed 12,000-seat Azadi Indoor Hall, with work expected to enter its implementation phase as soon as possible.

The photo shows the wreckage of Tehran's Azadi Indoor Hall which was destructed by the US-Israeli airstrikes on March 5, 2026.
IRNA

Iran names beach soccer squad for Asian Beach Games

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Ali Naderi named a 12-man squad for the upcoming Asian Beach Games.

The sixth edition of the multi-sport event will kick off on April 22 in Sanya, China.

Seyyed Mahdi Mirjalili, Reza Deiri, Davoud Shokri, Saeid Piramoun, Seyyed Ali Nazem, Mahdi Shirmohammadi, Ali Mirshekari, Movahed Mohammadpour, Mohammad-Ali Mokhtari, Mohammad-Ali Nazarzadeh, Mohammad Ma'soumizadeh, and Seyyed Mohammad Dastan have received a call-up by the Iranian head coach.

IRNA

Naderi said that several training camps and friendly matches have been cancelled due to the wartime situation, but stressed that his players will "give their all" at the showpiece in Sanya.

The Iranian coach explained that prior to the holy month of Ramadan, the team had completed 11 preparatory camps, during which the players reached an excellent level of physical conditioning. However, the final three camps scheduled for March were called off due to the military conflict between Iran and a U.S.-Israeli coalition.

"Friendly matches had been arranged against Russia and Belarus, followed by a planned appearance at a tournament in Brazil, but none of those fixtures materialized," Naderi told ILNA, adding: "Losing such competitive opportunities have affected the team's cohesion."

Naderi added that the Football Federation had offered strong support in implementing the technical staff's plans. However, he pointed out that Iran's group-stage rivals had used the same period to play several friendlies and compete in various tournaments, meaning there will be no easy matches in China.

The head coach concluded by stating that the players have continued their training – individually and sometimes in small groups – since February 28. To make up for the disruption, the team will travel to the competition venue 10 days early to reach full readiness through intensive training. "Our goal is to put on a strong performance and defend Iran's name in this tournament," he said.

Iran will be represented by 57 athletes across 10 sporting events – including beach wrestling, beach volleyball, beach handball, beach soccer, jiu-jitsu, beach kabaddi, athletics, 3x3 basketball, sport climbing, and water polo – at the Games, which will resume after a decade, following Da Nang 2016 in Vietnam.

World Taekwondo Junior Championships:

Iranian trio in action on Day 1

Sports Desk

Three Iranians will get their campaigns underway when the 15th edition of the World Taekwondo Junior Championships kicks off today in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Zahra Sadat Mousavi and Pinar Lotfizadeh will represent the country in the girls' -46kg and -59kg weight classes, respectively, with Amir-Ali Hazrati competing in the boys' +78kg category.

The second day of the competition will see Dina Babarahim vie for glory in the girls' -55kg class, while Taha Nazer (-48kg) and Mohammad-Erfan Khodaei (-55kg) will be in action in the boys' event.

WORLD TAEKWONDO

On Tuesday, Bahar Tahmasbi will compete in the girls' -42kg category, while in the boys' competition, Benyamin Soltanian (-73kg) and Amirarsalan Ahmadi (-45kg) will carry Iran's hopes.

Asal Goltapeh and Negar Mozaffari will compete for Iran in the girls' -68kg and -44kg events on Wednesday, with Mohammad Javad Geryan and Amir Eghbali taking the mat in the boys' -78kg and -59kg divisions.

Heliya Ebrahimian will represent Iran in the girls' -49kg category on Day 5. In the boys' events, Abolfazl Najafi and Parsa Hooshyar will go head-to-head with their opponents in the -68kg and -63kg divisions.

The championships will conclude with Aynaz Mikaeili and Rozhan Heydari in the girls' -63kg and -52kg events on Friday, while Ali Razmian competes in the boys' -51kg category.

A total of 986 young athletes will take to the mats across 20 weight categories for boys and girls in the Uzbek capital.

Named 'Caravan of Hormuz,' the Iranian squads had been conducting their preparatory camps in the north of the country amid the military conflict with the United States and Israel, which began on February 28, before embarking on their journey.

On Tuesday, they crossed the Turkish border by land and traveled to the city of Van. From there, the team flew to Tashkent, arriving on Friday morning.

The delegation has been named 'Hormuz' in honor of the bravery of Iran's armed forces in safeguarding the nation, particularly the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

Iran bagged a total of 11 medals, including a remarkable seven golds, to make a clean sweep of double team titles in the previous edition of the competition in Chuncheon, South Korea, in 2024.

Iranian saber team heads to Italy for FIE World Cup

ISNA

Sports Desk

Iran's national saber team departed for Italy to take part in a training camp with French coach Christian Bauer and compete in the Padua World Cup. The upcoming World Cup edition will kick off in the Italian city of Padua on April 19.

The Iranian fencers will join Bauer's camp in an effort to make up for several months away from group training sessions.

The Iranian squad consists of Mohammad Fotouhi, Nima Aqaei, Taha Kargarpour, Parsa Poursalman, and Ahmadreza Shahmiri.

The team is led by head coach Mohammad Rahbari, with Farzad Baher serving as assistant coach.

Iran's Faraji earns table tennis quota for Summer Youth Olympics

Sports Desk

Iranian table tennis prodigy Benyamin Faraji has secured a qualification berth for the Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympics – starting October 31 in the Senegalese capital – the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) has officially confirmed.

Faraji earned his place after winning a bronze medal at the 2025 Asian Youth Games in Bahrain and securing a spot among the world's top 10 under-19 players in the ITTF rankings.

The fourth edition of the Games will take place across 25 competitive sporting events in three host cities of Dakar, Diamniadio, and Saly.

TASNIM

Behshahr; jewel of eastern Mazandaran Province

Iranica Desk

Behshahr, located in the eastern part of Mazandaran Province, owes its charm and allure to its exceptional natural landscapes. The city boasts an impressive array of natural attractions, including waterfalls, caves, beaches, lush forests, and protected areas, making it a prime destination for domestic and international tourists alike. In addition to its natural wonders, Behshahr is home to several significant historical landmarks, such as Safi Abad Palace, Cheshmeh Emarat Garden, and the Shahriari House, each reflecting the city's rich cultural heritage.

Safi Abad Palace

Upon entering Behshahr, Safi Abad Palace immediately captures the attention of visitors and stands out as one of the city's most iconic attractions. Perched majestically atop a hill, the palace offers sweeping panoramic views of the city below, creating a breathtaking vantage point. This magnificent structure dates back to the glorious Safavid era and is officially listed among Iran's national heritage sites. While public access is currently restricted due to its location within a military zone, visitors can still admire the palace's grandeur from a distance, taking in its architectural splendor and historical significance.

Abbas Abad Garden

Abbas Abad Garden is a renowned historical and natural attraction situated on the outskirts of Behshahr, accessible via a scenic forest road. Approximately thirty minutes from the city center, the garden was commissioned by Shah Abbas I and stands as a testament to Persian landscape design. At the heart of this serene complex lies a picturesque lake, ideal for leisurely boating. Visitors can also explore a variety of amenities, including souvenir and handicraft shops, a restaurant, a children's playground, and restroom facilities, making the garden a complete recreational and cultural destination for families and tourists.

Abbas Abad Garden
wikipedia.org ning.org.uk

Sefid Chah Cemetery

Sefid Chah Cemetery, also known as the "Sefid (White) Cemetery," holds the distinction of being Iran's first Muslim cemetery, with a history spanning over 1,200 years. Richly adorned with intricate carvings and symbolic motifs, this cemetery transforms a traditional burial site into a remarkable historical and artistic treasure. Numerous vertical tombstones with unique and varied designs make it a compelling site to explore. According to local beliefs, the cemetery's lime-rich soil slows the decomposition process, preserving the remains longer than typical soils, further enhancing its historical mystique and cultural significance.

Mellat Park

Mellat Park offers the perfect retreat from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Visitors can enjoy tranquil walking paths, ancient trees, and verdant green spaces while also encountering a historic building from the Safavid period. This building, which now serves as Behshahr's Municipality, is registered among Iran's national heritage sites, allowing guests to combine the pleasures of nature with a glimpse of the city's architectural past.

Sang-e No Waterfall
kojachetor.com

Cheshmeh Emarat Garden

Cheshmeh Emarat Garden, located just ten minutes from central Behshahr, is named after a natural spring that emerges from the ground on the garden's ground floor. What sets this historical site apart is not merely its aesthetic charm or antiquity but its ingenious water system. The garden once transported spring water through channels to a small canal without the use of pumps, showcasing remarkable engineering for its time. Cheshmeh Emarat Garden is officially listed among Iran's national heritage sites, reflecting both its cultural and technical significance.

Yaghout-e Sorkh Recreational Complex

Situated near Bandar Amirabad, the Yaghout-e Sorkh Recreational Complex is a popular destination for leisure and family activities. The complex features a designated swimming area marked with safety nets, lifeguards, recreational boats, inflatable castles, and play areas for children. Additional amenities include shops, pavilions, dense shaded trees, and ample parking. On busy days, visitors frequently take advantage of the natural shade provided by the trees if the pavilions are fully occupied, making it a versatile and family-friendly spot for outdoor enjoyment.

Sang-e No Waterfall

Sang-e No Waterfall, located in southern Behshahr deep within the forest, remains relatively undiscovered despite its striking beauty and favorable climate. Visitors can park at a nearby lot and follow a forest trail to reach the waterfall. The trail requires crossing a riverbed covered with large and small rocks, making proper footwear essential due to the potential for slippery surfaces. The journey provides an adventurous and scenic experience for nature enthusiasts, offering both the tranquility of the forest and the visual splendor of cascading waters.

Yazd's Grand Mosque is timeless Iranian treasure

Iranica Desk

The Grand Mosque of Yazd (Jaame Mosque of Yazd), a priceless religious and historical monument dating back to the 6th century AH (12th century CE), continues to host travelers and tourists throughout the year, especially on weekly holidays.

The main structure of the mosque was originally built during the reign of the Kakuyids dynasty. The current mosque, however, dates back to the Al-e Mozaffar era of the 8th and 9th centuries AH (14th-15th centuries CE), IRNA wrote.

Following the construction of a shrine, square, reservoir, and clock, Seyyed Rokn al-Din undertook the repair and partial reconstruction of the mosque. He was succeeded by Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, who continued the work and added minarets on either side of the dome.

In 778 AH (1376 CE), Afif al-Din built the mosque's corridor, while the portico to the left of the dome was constructed by Shah Yahya. During the era of Mirza Shahrukh Timur, the mosque — then coated in white plaster — was adorned with exquisite tilework, and a calligraphic inscription of Surah al-Fath, penned by Baha al-Din Hezar Asb, was installed inside. The mosque's mihrab (prayer niche) is carved from a single piece of marble. Above the mosque rises a double-shelled, square-shaped dome with a ribbed outer surface. One of the two minarets at the main entrance features two independent spiral staircases.

Beneath the mosque's courtyard lies a Payab (a subterranean cooling chamber) adorned with bricks and tiles. Two entrances on the northern and western sides provide access to this chamber. In 862 AH (1458 CE), by order of Nizam al-Din Jahanshah, titles of Mirza Jahanshahi were engraved on tiles and installed above the mosque's entrance.

During the rule of Amir Chakhmaq, the mosque's courtyard was paved with marble, two marble columns were installed on either side of the portico adjacent to the mosque, and an intricately decorated pulpit replaced the old wooden one.

Meanwhile, another old and renowned mosque in Yazd Province, known as "Dar al-Ebadeh" (the Abode of Worship), is the Molla Esmaeil Mosque, which hosts the weekly Friday prayers in Yazd.

This striking religious structure was built by Molla Esmaeil Aqdaei, a famous scholar of the 13th century AH (19th century CE).

The mosque features a vast ivan (portico) with a span of 15.75 meters, a Shabestan (prayer hall) supported by 31 columns, a magnificent dome, brick facades with inscriptions, and a combination of tile and stonework. Above the entrance portal are writings in the Nasta'liq script and various stone tablets.

The Yazd Grand Mosque is situated in one of the city's oldest neighborhoods, allowing visitors to plan tours of several other nearby historical sites.

Yazd is a treasure trove of Iranian art, culture, and civilization, boasting numerous religious monuments, shrines, mosques, Hosseiniehs, Zoroastrian pilgrimage sites, historic houses, reservoirs, gardens, windcatchers, and bazaars.

Yazd Province has a population of 1.5 million people.

IRNA

Boosting tourism investment along Sassanid Axis

Iranica Desk

The Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Fars Province has announced a series of strategic decisions aimed at stimulating investment and restoring globally significant sites along the Sassanid Archaeological Landscape. These developments followed an official visit to Firuzabad, where the Behzad Moridi conducted a comprehensive inspection of the region's landmark monuments, as reported by a cultural heritage correspondent.

During the site visit, Moridi emphasized the profound scientific and historical significance of the Palace of Ardashir Babakan.

"Archaeological excavation operations at this prestigious World Heritage Site commenced last February, yielding valuable insights and artifacts. While these efforts were temporarily suspended due to the region's specific circumstances, meticulous planning is now in place to ensure these excavations resume shortly," he stated, according to chtn.ir.

Moridi also confirmed the restart of restoration projects focusing on the palace's iconic ivan (portico). "We are diligently pursuing the structural restoration of this magnificent edifice as a core part of our institutional and social responsibilities, utilizing the specifically allocated fiscal resources," he further explained.

In reference to the ancient city of Gur, Moridi highlighted, "Our immediate priority is the facilitation of tourist access and the enhancement of the visitor experience. Of the four original entrances to this historic city, the 'Ardashir Entrance' is currently undergoing improvement and graveling to streamline visitor movement."

chtn.ir

Furthermore, he outlined upcoming plans to issue a formal call for land acquisition within the designated boundaries of three primary monuments located within the ancient city's perimeter.

A pivotal segment of the visit involved evaluating the natural tourism capacities of Firuzabad, with a specific focus on Hayghar Canyon. Following an extensive field survey of the landscape, Moridi characterized the canyon as one of the most breathtaking and unique natural formations in the country.

"Hayghar Canyon possesses immense potential for designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site. In our strategic planning, we must approach its preservation and promotion through a global lens," he asserted.

Moridi also conducted visits to local eco-lodges and engaged in discussions with those who are active in the sector to address existing challenges. He identified nomadic eco-lodges as a vital complementary attraction to the Sassanid Axis and announced the department's full support for upgrading the infrastructure of these specialized accommodation units.

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Attacks inflict $48.6mn damage on Iran's cultural heritage sites

A general view of the Sa'adabad Complex, damaged during US and Israeli attacks on Iran that began on February 28 and continued through March 18, 2026, in Tehran, Iran.
FATEMEH BAHRAMI/AFP

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri said on Saturday that recent US and Israeli attacks caused an estimated 75 trillion rials (about $48.6mn) in damage to historical sites across the country.

Salehi-Amiri said 140 registered sites were hit in 20 provinces, calling the losses "significant" and confirming the assessment had been formally submitted to the government. Tehran bore the brunt with 63 sites affected, followed by Isfahan with 23 and Kurdestan with 12, ISNA reported.

In the capital, damage was reported at prominent landmarks including Golestan Palace and the Sa'adabad Complex, as well as a range of museums, historic buildings and cultural institutions. Authorities said several facilities within the Sa'adabad complex, including multiple museums, sustained impacts.

Isfahan, a major cultural hub, recorded damage to sites within the Naqsh-e Jahan Square ensemble, including the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque and Ali Qapu Palace, alongside other historic mosques, palaces and traditional houses. The Chehel Sotoun Palace museum complex was also among affected sites.

In the western provinces, officials listed multiple damaged locations in Kurdestan and Kermanshah, including historic mansions, mosques and bathhouses. In Lorestan, the Falak-ol-Aflak Castle complex sustained damage from blast waves, authorities said.

Khuzestan province reported 13 affected sites, with preliminary assessments indicating impacts on historical areas and museums in cities such as Dezful, Ahvaz and Andimeshk. Some locations tied to the Sacred Defense era were also cited.

Salehi-Amiri said restoration planning was under way, stressing the need to "preserve" national heritage and ensure rapid rehabilitation.

He added that detailed technical surveys would refine the initial estimates as authorities move to safeguard damaged structures and reopen affected cultural venues.

Iran logs over 29m Nowruz trips as travel aids social recovery

Arts & Culture Desk

IRNA

Iran recorded more than 29 million trips during the Nowruz holidays from March 16 to April 4, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey said, describing travel as a key mechanism to restore "calm" and social resilience in the wake of recent tensions.

"This year's Nowruz was 'unprecedented'," Mohseni Bandpey said, noting that the holiday period coincided with a sensitive national environment following what officials termed the "third imposed war."

He added that travel shifted from a purely leisure activity into a stabilizing force that helped sustain normal life flows, IRNA reported.

Authorities moved early to streamline services and shore up readiness. The Central Headquarters for Travel Services Coordination convened 137 meetings across national and provincial levels from mid-March to early April, including emergency sessions and joint reviews attended by the minister.

Provincial and county-level coordination began on March 13, enabling decentralized, on-the-ground management, while designated supervisors monitored compliance with service and security protocols.

Nowruz trips were registered with an average stay of 6.8 days and a repeat travel rate of 34%, marking longer stays and multiple journeys during the period.

Mohseni Bandpey said travel patterns underwent a "fundamental" shift, with preferences tilting toward smaller cities and rural areas. Spending priorities also pivoted from entertainment to essential goods, while trip planning became more fluid.

Data based on mobile tracking showed the northern provinces topping the list of destinations. Mazandaran drew 4.48 million travelers, followed by Gilan with 3.21 million. Khorasan Razavi hosted 1.81 million travelers, while East Azarbaijan received 1.66 million. Bushehr ranked 31st with 232,943 visitors.

Supervisory teams carried out 44,527 inspections of accommodation centers and travel agencies to ensure service quality and standards. The checks resulted in 1,582 commendations, 2,161 warnings, 166 formal notices, and 131 closures or suspensions. Authorities also flagged 878 deficiencies for corrective action.

Mohseni Bandpey said evolving travel behavior requires updated governance tools. He called for steering travelers toward less congested destinations, expanding access infrastructure, strengthening supply distribution networks, and developing a security-tourism atlas to better manage travel flows. Such measures, he said, would bolster the sector's resilience and enhance public satisfaction in the years ahead.

Music album 'Minab Angels' unveiled, honoring schoolchildren killed in strike

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture Ministry on Saturday unveiled the 'Minab Angels' music album at the 'For Iran, the Source of Art' event in Tehran, featuring works dedicated to elementary schoolchildren killed in a missile strike in Minab, southern Iran.

Babak Rezaei, director general of the Music Office at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's Artistic Affairs Department, said the album compiles pieces produced over the past 40 days by Iranian musicians, centered on the "martyred" children of the Shajareh Tayebeh school in the southern city, ILNA reported.

The collection has been released by the Iran Music Association and will be distributed via cards handed out at the ceremony and at evening public gatherings in Tehran. Each card carries a QR code that opens access to the tracks upon scanning.

Contributors include Zanko, Ali Raha, Hatef, Mohammad Fereshtehnejad, Reza Rahimian, and Amir Haghighat.

Rezaei described the project as a cultural tribute shaped in the wake of a national tragedy.

Theater production 'Hotel' to reopen in Tehran, launching 2026 stage season

Arts & Culture Desk

Directed by Marjan Aghanouri, the immersive theatrical production 'Hotel' will reopen its run on April 16, at Iran Art Boutique in Tehran, marking the venue's first performance of the current Iranian calendar year which started March 21, 2026, after its earlier staging was suspended in last year amid wartime disruptions.

Written by Marjan Aghanouri and Solaleh Safari, the experimental and participatory piece initially began performances in March 2026 but was halted due to "special conditions" in the country before returning to the stage this week.

Positioned as an atmospheric, site-specific experience, 'Hotel' places audiences in a suspended, uncanny environment where they move alongside performers through a decaying, fire-scarred hotel.

The narrative follows a theater troupe attempting to stage a performance inside the building, only for the storyline to be disrupted by a character identified as "the jinn," who alters the trajectory of events.

"I want to write to the Performing Arts Center so they stop turning my home into a theater hall," reads the production's synopsis.

Aghanouri, a recipient of an honorary medal at the 2025 Actors' House Theater Festival, has previously won multiple national and international awards, including best director at the Tehran Theater Festival and best actress at the Simorgh International Festival, alongside appearances at regional cultural events.

Italian composer unveils 'Iran Symphony' in Rome

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Ambassador to Italy Mohammadreza Sabouri and Italian composer Antonio Papalardo unveiled the 'Iran Symphony' in Rome, celebrating cultural ties between Iran and Italy through a musical work presented as a symbol of solidarity with the Iranian people.

The event brought together diplomatic and cultural figures in the Italian capital, where Papalardo's newly composed 'Iran Symphony' was introduced as an artistic gesture of "solidarity" and respect for Iran's societal resilience, ISNA reported. The Iranian envoy highlighted the piece as a reflection of "cultural connection" and shared artistic heritage amid sensitive regional circumstances. Organizers described the ceremony as an evening "filled with art and epic spirit," featuring a preview of the symphony's final movement. The performance incorporated heroic verses attributed to Ferdowsi alongside a poem by Italian writer Achille Zaino titled "Lions of Persia," marking a cross-cultural narrative woven into the composition.

Guests also heard excerpts from the concluding section of the symphony, marking its official unveiling in the Italian cultural scene.