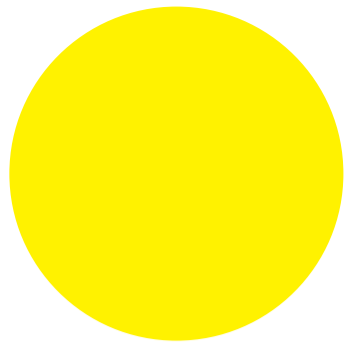


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## US, Israel pursue no-war no-peace strategy on Iran



By Afifeh Abedi  
International affairs expert

### INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

As the two-week ceasefire between Iran and the United States drew close to expiring, Pakistan's efforts as a mediator to convene a new round of talks continued until the last moment, but Iran ultimately declined to take part in the negotiations. US President Donald Trump, despite earlier threats, announced that he had extended the ceasefire. He has, however, continued to refuse lifting the naval blockade, which Iran has declared a precondition for entering negotiations. In an interview with Iran Daily, Afifeh Abedi, an international affairs expert, argued that the current US-Israeli policy toward Iran amounts to a "no war, no peace" scenario, though one constrained by serious limitations. She believes Washington and Tel Aviv will ultimately be compelled either to accept a fair agreement with Iran or back away from both war and the region.

IRAN DAILY: How do you assess Iran's

decision not to attend the Islamabad talks? Was it driven by the alleged differences among senior Iranian officials, or by the lack of understanding between Iran and the United States over the terms of a possible agreement?

ABEDI: The continuation of hostile US positions and practical measures against Iran during the ceasefire and the first round of talks in Islamabad was a reminder of Washington's repeated bad faith at the negotiating table. The US president's positions indicate Washington is not seeking a fair agreement. The Trump administration, in trying to break the deadlock of war, is looking at the negotiating table for gains it failed to secure on the battlefield.

Beyond evidence suggesting the Trump administration remains captive to flawed calculations about Iran, developments on the ground also indicate that the United States and Israel are not in fact seeking an end to the war. Although both countries have faced serious constraints in their war against Iran, longstanding hostility and failure in war have pushed them toward a "no war, no peace" condition, through which they seek to advance hostile plans inside Iran and make up for the gaps created by the war.

How should Trump's extension of the ceasefire, alongside his refusal to lift the naval blockade that Iran considers a precondition for negotiations, be interpreted?

Trump's unilateral extension of the ceasefire does not amount to an American concession to Iran; rather, it reflects Washington's serious constraints in reigniting war against Iran. If the United States believed it could achieve its goals through continuing the war, it would not hesitate for a moment. But it is now facing limitations. For that reason, despite claiming the ceasefire was extended in hopes of a second round of talks, Washington has not accepted Iran's condition for returning to the table—namely, an end to the blockade. The United States is planning for war, but at this juncture it has no more than three military options: 1. continuing the war in the form of the 40-day war, which so far has yielded no gains. 2. escalating tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, a move carrying heavy consequences for both the US and global economy. 3. seizing the enriched material by force, something it has already attempted once and failed.

The ceasefire, therefore, has been extended with the blockade still in place so Washington can buy time and find a way out. But a prolonged blockade will

carry growing economic consequences for both the United States and the world.

What are the main factors and variables that could break the current deadlock between Tehran and Washington?

At present, three major issues are on the table in Iran-US negotiations: Iran's nuclear program, the future of the Strait of Hormuz, and compensation for damages caused by the unlawful US and Israeli war against Iran.

Iran's proposals on a nuclear agreement, which had attracted international attention even before the war, including from Oman as mediator—as acknowledged by the Omani foreign minister and a British intelligence official—remain workable. On the Strait of Hormuz as well, beyond Iran's sovereign rights, Tehran's proposals are entirely fair. As for compensation for the unjust damages caused by the United States and Britain, Iran has no interest in American money—funded either through US taxpayers or through the plunder of other nations. Given the strategic importance of securing the Strait, Iran has raised the issue of transit charges with two aims: contributing to regional security guarantees and compensating for war damages.

If the United States is genuinely seeking an agreement, it must accept Iran's practical and ethical proposals, particularly as other countries have shown no opposition to them. But the problem remains the Trump administration's flawed calculations and the extent to which it has been taken hostage by Israel and [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu.

If the naval blockade is not lifted and negotiations are not resumed, what are the most likely scenarios ahead?

A prolonged US blockade of the Strait of Hormuz will not go unanswered by Iran, and that would mean intensified pressure on both the American and global economy. Under such conditions, the United States will come under pressure from its own allies, because the blockade has harmed—and will continue to harm—their economies. But overall, the current option pursued by the United States and Israel appears to be "no war, no peace" against Iran. Yet this scenario itself faces significant constraints. Iran, having been under pressure for decades, will impose the reality of its power on the United States.

Washington will either have to reach a fair agreement with Iran, or quietly pull back from both the region and the war.

# FM spokesperson: Iran tracks 'with full vigilance' moves after truce extension

## International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesman reacted to the US president's unilateral extension of the ceasefire between Iran and the United States, saying that Tehran will closely monitor developments while taking necessary measures to safeguard its national interests and security. Esmail Baqaei said on Wednesday that Iran has not been the initiator of the imposed war and all of Iran's actions were carried out in line with its inherent right of legitimate self-defense against the US-Israeli military aggression.

Iran, while closely monitoring field and political developments, will adopt the necessary and appropriate measures to protect its national interests and security, he added.

He further noted that the Armed Forces, with full vigilance, are ready to defend Iran's national integrity comprehensively and decisively against any threat or

act of mischief.

His remarks came after the US President Donald Trump extended a two-week ceasefire with Iran while announcing the continuation of an illegal blockade on Iran's ports and vessels, despite Tehran's insistence that the blockade must be lifted for bilateral talks to continue.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump said the extension came "upon the request of (Pakistan's Army Chief) Field Marshal Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan."

It was extended a day before its expiration as a new round of peace talks was on hold.

Pakistan had planned to host a second round of talks, but the White House suspended Vice President JD Vance's planned trip to Islamabad as Iran decided not to attend the talks due to the US blockade on Iran's ports.

## China welcomes ceasefire extension

Chinese Foreign Ministry

spokesperson Guo Jiakun also reacted to the extension of the ceasefire, saying that the current situation in the Middle East is at "a critical stage."

He said China "is ready" to work with the international community to maintain peace, following four principles President Xi Jinping proposed a few days earlier, including peaceful coexistence and adherence to international law.

"It's imperative to prevent the recurrence of the conflict with utmost efforts," he said.

## Second round of negotiations

Regarding the possibility of another round of negotiations, Baqaei said diplomacy is a tool for securing national interests and security.

"Whenever we conclude that the necessary and logical grounds are prepared for using this tool to realize national interests and consolidate the achievements of the Iranian na-



Esmail Baqaei  
IRNA

tion in frustrating the enemies' evil goals, we will take action," Baqaei added.

The US and Israel launched a war of aggression against Iran on February 28, assassinating Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several top mil-

itary commanders.

Iran's Armed Forces responded with 100 waves of retaliatory strikes under Operation True Promise 4, launching hundreds of ballistic and hypersonic missiles, as well as drones, against American military bases across West Asia and Israeli positions

throughout the occupied territories.

On April 8, a two-week ceasefire was brokered by Pakistan between the two sides, though tensions remain high over US threats of a naval blockade and Iran's firm control over the Strait of Hormuz.

## IRGC seizes two vessels in Hormuz for naval breaches



AFP

## International Desk

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy on Wednesday seized two ships in the Strait of Hormuz for maritime violations amid heightened tensions between Iran and the US in the strategic waterway. The IRGC identified the vessels as the MSC-Francesca, which it said belongs to the Israeli regime, and the Epaminodes.

The vessels, the IRGC said, were operating without authorization, tampering with navigation aid systems, and endangering maritime security in an attempt to exit the strait covertly.

"With the intelligence dominance of the forces, these vessels were identified and stopped in order to uphold

the rights of the noble Iranian nation in the Strait of Hormuz," the IRGC Navy said.

It added that the vessels have now been transferred to Iranian territorial waters for inspection of their cargo and documents.

The IRGC Navy reiterated that any attempt to disrupt the implementation of laws announced by Iran for transit through the Strait of Hormuz, or any activity inconsistent with safe passage through this strategic waterway, will be continuously monitored and met with decisive and legal action against violators.

It was the first time Iran has seized ships since the beginning of the war at the end of February. Since the early days of the US-Israeli aggression against Iran, the coun-

try's Armed Forces have closed the waterway in response to the illegal and unprovoked aggression. However, Iran on Friday declared the strait was open to commercial shipping.

A US blockade on Iranian ports and its recent seizure of two Iranian commercial vessels have further complicated the situation in the strait from which about 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas usually passes through.

Iran has condemned the US Navy intercepting Iranian ships at sea as part of its blockade, including a huge tanker bound for Singapore that was boarded in the Indian Ocean on Tuesday. Iran's Foreign Ministry accused the US of "piracy at sea and state terrorism."

Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, in a letter addressed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, formally requested that the international body to compel the US to release an Iranian vessel Touska, its crew, their families, and all affected individuals immediately and unconditionally.

Amir Saeed Irvani drew "urgent attention to the continued international violations committed by the United States against the Islamic Republic, including the deliberate targeting of Iranian commercial vessels."

## Araghchi raps Europe's silence over attacks on nuclear sites

Hormuz tangle direct result of US 'lawlessness, illegal strikes'

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Wednesday condemned as "unacceptable" the silence of certain European states over US-Israeli aggression against Iran's nuclear facilities.

Araghchi warned that such double standards are increasingly weakening international law and undermining the non-proliferation regime.

He made the remarks in a phone conversation with his Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani.

Iran's nuclear facilities have been the main targets of the US and Israel during their aggression against Iran in June and the current military strikes on Iran.

International humanitarian law generally prohibits attacks on nuclear facilities.

While explaining the criminal acts committed by the US-Israeli aggressors against Iran during the recent military aggression, the Iranian foreign minister highlighted the responsibility of all governments to condemn the flagrant violations of the United Nations Charter and international law by the aggressors.

Araghchi also referred to the situation in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, saying that the prevailing conditions in the waterway are a direct consequence of US violations of



Abbas Araghchi

Antonio Tajani

international law.

Araghchi reiterated that the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz stems directly from US "lawlessness and its illegal military strikes against a sovereign UN member."

Araghchi told Tajani that the responsibility for the repercussions of this situation on the global economy lies with the aggressors.

"Iran, as a coastal state of the Strait of Hormuz, has implemented measures under international law to safeguard its security," he added.

The two diplomats also exchanged views on the security, legal, and economic consequences of the joint US-Israeli military aggression against Iran. For his part, the Italian foreign minister called for the return of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf, expressing Italy's willingness to contribute to strengthening security throughout the West Asian region.

## Iranian officials hail IRGC on its anniversary

Guards say ready to create 'shocking events' beyond enemy's comprehension

## International Desk

Top Iranian officials hailed the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) for its role in safeguarding the country's security, especially during the recent aggression by the United States and Israel against the country.

In a message commemorating the anniversary of the establishment of the IRGC on Wednesday, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the critical role that the IRGC has played in safeguarding the security and dignity of the country amid various external threats. Pezeshkian said that during the recent US-Israeli war of aggression, the IRGC effectively disrupted the enemies' plots and nefarious ambitions through a decisive, strategic, and victorious response.

Describing it metaphorically as a "good, strong tree" providing shade, Pezeshkian articulated how the IRGC has steadfastly con-

tributed to Iran's independence and national security throughout the years. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said the IRGC's struggles in three imposed wars against the Iranian nation and armed insurgencies targeting border and security and cities represent a "great medal of honor" on the chest of the guards, who have sacrificed to the last drop of blood for the Islamic Republic. In his message, Qalibaf described the IRGC as a source of pride and glory for Iran, saying it is a force that has shown unparalleled sacrifice in protecting the ideological and physical borders of the country.

"The IRGC is one of the distinctions that sets Iran apart from other countries of the world," Qalibaf said. "It is a blessed tree rooted in the soil of this land, whose branches are the people, in whose flesh, skin and blood the protection of dear Iran flows."

He added that the IRGC is present in natural

disasters, construction efforts and cultural arenas just as it is on the battlefield, and rushes to protect Iran and the revolution wherever their names are invoked.

The IRGC itself announced its readiness to create shocking events far beyond the comprehension and calculation of the US-Israeli enemy on the battlefield.

In a statement marking the anniversary of the IRGC's establishment, the organization emphasized that its multiple forces and the popular Basij "are ready to create achievements and shocking events far beyond the comprehension and calculation of the warmongering and treacherous enemy, utilizing new cards on the battlefield." The statement said that IRGC is at the peak of readiness and determination to continue the battle against the enemies and is "ready for decisive, certain, and immediate confrontation with any threat or repetition of enemy aggression."

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

CARTOON



# Iran snubs US blockade with \$910m oil exports, data shows

## Economy Desk

At least 34 tankers linked to Iran have been able to bypass the blockade by the US Navy, the Financial Times reported, citing data from Vortexa, an analytical company that tracks cargo shipments.

As Vortexa reported, at least 19 tankers linked to Iran have broken the blockade and left the Persian Gulf. At least 15 more entered the gulf from the Arabian Sea, bound for Iran.

Of the tankers that left the Persian Gulf, at least six were confirmed to be carrying a combined 10.7 million barrels of Iranian oil. Iranian oil is usually sold at a discount to benchmark Brent because of sanctions. At a discount of \$10, such a volume would have brought about \$910 million in revenue, the FT writes.

According to Vortexa, one of the two loaded tankers that left Iranian waters on April 17 was the Iranian-flagged supertanker Dorna. It passed the US blockade with its transponder - a device that transmits the location and iden-

tification of a vessel - turned off. Two more oil tankers passed the blockade on April 20.

The US, in an attempt to force Iran to conclude a peace agreement, imposed a blockade on all vessels entering or leaving Iranian coastal waters on April 13. The blockade was later expanded to include all Iranian vessels on the high seas, as well as vessels carrying goods that could be used by Iran in the conflict. Since then, the US has detained an Iranian-flagged cargo ship in the Gulf of Oman and intercepted another sanctioned tanker in the Indo-Pacific.

The US Central Command said April 21 that the US Navy has forced 28 ships to return to Iranian ports since the blockade began. "The blockade has been a huge success," US President Donald Trump claimed in an interview with CNBC. He promised not to lift the blockade until a "final deal" with Iran is reached.

In return, Iran refused to open the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of the world's oil and gas supplies passed before the war,

because of the blockade on April 18.

Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said the US blockade of Iranian ports "is an act of war and thus a violation of the ceasefire," in a post on X on Tuesday afternoon.

Tensions have remained high following the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28. While major shipping companies have suspended operations in the region, tankers linked to Iran have continued to transit the strategic waterway.

According to OPEC's latest monthly report, Iran has become the group's second-largest producer for the first time in 12 years as output from Arab members declined during the 40-day conflict that is now under a ceasefire.

OPEC reported Iran's oil production at 3.06 million barrels per day in March, marking its return to the No. 2 position for the first time since the tightening of US sanctions in 2015. Iran had previously held that position after Saudi Arabia until 2014.



IRNA

The report also showed that the price of Iran's heavy crude rose by \$57.51 month-on-month to \$124.10 per barrel in March. Trump said the US blockade will remain in place and that the ceasefire will be extended until Iran submits a "unified proposal,"

or until discussions are concluded "one way or the other," in a Truth Social post late Tuesday.

The two-week cease-fire agreed earlier this month was due to expire Wednesday. The extension prevents further escalation but ensures traffic through the Strait

of Hormuz will remain limited for a while yet.

Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said the US blockade of Iranian ports "is an act of war and thus a violation of the ceasefire," in a post on X on Tuesday afternoon.

## Ministry vows swift restoration of Mobarakeh Steel, nixes relocation plans



## Economy Desk

Iran will rebuild the damaged Mobarakeh Steel complex in its original location in Isfahan, a government spokesperson said on Wednesday, dismissing reports that the facility could be relocated to the southern port city of Bandar Abbas. Ezzatollah Zarei, spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, told IRNA that reconstruction would proceed swiftly, with planning underway on design, timelines and resource allocation. Once finalized, implementation will begin, he said.

Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC) and Khuzestan Steel Company in southwestern Khuzestan Province were hit multiple times during the American-Israeli war that began on February 28. MSC is working to restore stable

production after parts of its lines were damaged during the hostilities.

Zarei rejected discussions about relocating the complex to Bandar Abbas, saying it would be restored at its previous site in Isfahan.

He said the country's land-use planning framework is the main basis for the establishment and development of industrial units and parks. All industries and residential developments seeking new establishment — whether public or private — must obtain permits from the secretariat of the national land-use council before beginning operations.

Assessments of water resources, environmental considerations and regional capacity are key criteria in issuing such permits, aimed at balancing industrial development with environmental sustainability, he

added.

Industries that are only rebuilding or upgrading existing production lines are not required to obtain new permits and may continue operating at their current locations, he said.

Planning for reconstruction of industrial units damaged in the attacks — including design, scheduling and financing — is underway and will move to execution once finalized, Zarei said. Proper implementation of the land-use plan will ensure development proceeds in a balanced and sustainable manner aligned with environmental and water resource capacities.

## Market to rebalance within two months

Separately, Rasoul Khalifeh Soltani, a member of Iran's steel association, said the domestic steel market — particularly steel sheets — is expected to return to balance within two months, Mehr news agency reported. "In the short term, we can compensate for the country's steel needs through imports," he said, according to the Tehran Chamber of Commerce.

He added that domestic buyers should refrain from purchases for now and wait for the market to return to equilibrium within the next two months.

## Shutdown shock: Iran's digital economy hemorrhages up to \$15m daily

## Economy Desk

Internet disruptions over the past 50 days have inflicted heavy losses on Iran's digital economy, with damages estimated at \$10 million to \$15 million per day, a senior industry official said.

"The estimates are fairly reliable and the losses are very significant. In my view, we are incurring at least \$10 million to \$15 million per day in direct, indirect and opportunity losses due to the country's internet situation, meaning close to \$1 billion in damage to the economy," Abbas Ashtiani, head of the blockchain commission at Iran's ICT Guild Organization, told IRNA.

Internet access across Iran was largely shut down from the early hours of the February 28 US-Israeli attack, with connectivity dropping to around 2% of pre-war levels, according to monitors.

Since the early days of the April 8 ceasefire, authorities have gradually expanded limited access to selected individuals and entities, but most of the country's population of more than 90 million remains offline during the war with the United States and Israel.

Ashtiani said restoring losses would require prioritizing internet access as a key driver of economic growth. He added that compensating for the damage to



IRNA

digital businesses would not be possible without investment in internet infrastructure.

"Internet stability, speed and investment in infrastructure quality are in fact investments in future economic development and GDP growth," he said.

He said businesses suffered significant economic damage during the disruptions, describing the period as a major missed opportunity.

"Without internet access, businesses cannot meet their international data needs, and when people lack access, customers also face difficulties. Considering both factors, the damage caused by the internet disruption has been substantial," he said.

Ashtiani said limited access to platforms such as Gmail and Google has had some positive effect, but remains marginal.

"While the impact is positive, it is not enough to compensate for the damage. Returning to previous conditions and recovering losses will take a long time, and shortening this period requires investment in improving infrastructure and internet quality," he said.

He added that smaller businesses and online shops have been affected differently, with those operating on domestic platforms recovering faster, while those reliant on platforms such as Instagram have suffered the most.

Ashtiani said representatives of digital businesses have raised their demands with the government and the communications ministry, expressing hope that measures — including restoring broader internet access for businesses and the public — would be implemented soon.

## Foreign investment board okays \$126m projects in first post-war session

## Economy Desk

Iran's Foreign Investment Board approved 35 foreign investment proposals worth \$126 million in its first session of the new year that began on March 21, state media reported.

According to Tasnim news agency, citing the public relations office of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran, the board

held its 304th meeting — and the first of the new year — on Monday.

A total of 38 foreign investment applications across various sectors were reviewed, including renewable energy and solar power plant development, food, pharmaceutical and health industries, housing, petroleum derivatives production, maritime transport, textiles, services and other industrial sectors.

The applications came from multiple

countries, including Russia, Canada, Spain, Dominica, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Oman, Bahrain, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China, as well as Iranians living abroad. Of these, 35 projects were ultimately approved by the board.

The Foreign Investment Board holds monthly meetings at the investment organization, where numerous foreign investment applications are reviewed and approved.

The board held 13 sessions throughout the last Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, 2025, resulting in the approval of nearly 650 applications from foreign investors, joint companies and Iranian contracting parties, worth \$17 billion.

According to statistics released by the Ministry of Economy and Finance on March 18, the value of foreign investment projects in Iran's free trade zones

rose by 531% in the first 11 months of the last year, while realized foreign investment grew by 268%.

The ministry said at the time that domestic investment attracted in free zones increased by 125% during the same period, while realized domestic investment rose by 36%. Exports from free zones increased by 14%, and the value of production in these regions grew by 28%.

# Redesigning role of Strait of Hormuz in tech cold war

By Mehdi Rouhani  
Researcher

## OPINION

Within the classical lexicon of geopolitics, the Strait of Hormuz was predominantly recognized as a vital artery for fossil-based energy. Nevertheless, concomitant with the proliferation of the digital economy and the intensification of technological rivalries among great powers, the nature of this waterway's influence is undergoing a profound metamorphosis. This piece posits that a closure or disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, transcending a conventional shock to the petroleum market, could cause systemic damage to processing infrastructures and the physical supply chain of technology on a global scale. Such an event possesses the potential to accelerate the transition from technological globalization toward regional bloc-formation, thereby introducing novel variables into technological competitions.

### Impact of Hormuz closure upon global tech architecture

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through three principal mechanisms, accelerates the trends of technological nationalism and regionalism, altering the dynamics of the cold war of technology:

#### • Disruption of the physical base of the microelectronics industry (a material crisis):

The common assumption maintains that microchips are fabricated exclusively from silicon; however, semiconductor production exhibits a profound dependency upon advanced petrochemical products (including diverse specialty polymers, resins, and premium-grade chemical solvents), a non-trivial proportion of whose raw materials originate from the Persian Gulf region. A disruption within the Strait confronts the physical supply chain of technological blocs with challenges. This shock demonstrates that mastery over the "chip design layer" remains fragile absent assurances regarding the stability of the "base chemical materials layer". The consequence of this phenomenon shall be an intensification of technological nationalism and the augmentation of efforts by nations to transfer base material production chains within their own secure boundaries — a process denominated "onshoring".

#### • Shock to the processing ecosystem and AI development:

The vanguard of contemporary technological rivalry is the development of large language models (LLMs) and artificial intelligence (AI). A common denominator among these technologies is their escalating demand for energy to feed colossal data centers. Upon the emergence of a crisis in the Strait of Hormuz and a subsequent escalation in energy prices, the cost of training and maintaining AI models will increase dramatically. Under such circumstances, a competitive advantage will accrue to any nation possessing superior



INTELLECTIA

processing resilience. This event could accelerate the transition of technological powers away from conventional imported energy sources and toward the utilization of dedicated nuclear-powered data centers or alternative energy sources.

#### • Diminution of the significance of economic efficiency and the formation of technological security blocs:

Previously, the logic of the technology market was predicated upon "minimum production cost". A shock to the arteries of energy could fundamentally transform this paradigm, thereby prioritizing the concept of supply chain security. In this scenario, governments will impose the costs of security provision upon the market in the form of subsidies, and global supply chains will cede their position to circumscribed networks and bloc-structured arrangements — a phenomenon known as "friend-shoring". The perpetuation of this trajectory could culminate in the fragmentation of the Internet and technological standards (the so-called "Splinter-net"), wherein each geopolitical bloc develops its own isolated hardware and networks to remain immune from exogenous shocks.

#### Policy implications and recommendations

Based upon the foregoing analysis, reliance upon traditional approaches for a nation that dominates such a geotechnological chokepoint proves inadequate to address novel dynamics. The following policy implications are proposed to facilitate the transition toward intelligent diplomacy and governance:

#### • First implication: transition from physical control toward intelligent regulation and data-driven control

The physical closure of the Strait using traditional instruments (such as mine-laying) would weaken international legitimacy and generate a global consensus against the actor. The Iranian policymakers ought to move toward intelligent and asymmetric regulation. The deployment of maritime electronic warfare (disruption of AIS navigation systems of specific vessels), the imposition of stringent environmental regulations predicated upon monitoring of meticulous, data-driven inspections alongside technical standardization of vessels could be utilized as soft instruments. In this scenario, the Strait is not closed; rather, the flow of transit becomes sluggish, costly, and unpredictable for hostile blocs within the tech cold war.

• Second implication: activation of a strategic barter (energy in exchange for technology diplomacy)

Upon comprehending that an energy shock directly threatens the processing capacity of great powers, the policymaker ought not to exchange energy solely for currency. Guaranteeing the secure and stable passage of energy could be utilized as a lever in negotiations aimed at reducing or circumventing technological sanctions. The provision of energy security to demanding blocs must be directly linked to the facilitation of access to cutting-edge technologies and the development of technological infrastructures.

#### • Third implication: de-dollarization of maritime transit and the imposition of fees based upon a national or regional cryptocurrency

The current global financial tracking system is predicated upon SWIFT and the hegemony of the US dollar, which renders susceptibility to sanctions extremely elevated. The policymaker could condition the

receipt of maritime service fees (such as pilotage fees, the environmental levy for traversing the Strait, or security escort services) upon payment via an Iranian base cryptocurrency or a privacy-preserving central bank digital currency (CBDC).

This measure not only generates an artificial yet potent demand for a national cryptocurrency but also, due to the encrypted and decentralized nature of blockchain technology, entirely conceals the financial transactions of shipping companies from the view of Western sanctioning entities (such as OFAC). This signifies the creation of a profoundly opaque and untraceable financial conduit for generating foreign currency revenue, thereby effectively nullifying financial sanctions at this chokepoint.

#### • Fourth implication: monopolization of secure navigation services within electronic warfare

Should the cold war intensify, deliberate and controlled disruptions of GPS signals (GPS Spoofing) within the Strait's perimeter could be utilized as an instrument of pressure. Under these conditions, Western navigation systems would lose their efficacy.

In contrast, the policymaker could furnish a "secure, encrypted local positioning system," compelling vessels to purchase a subscription and receive its signals in order to traverse the

Strait safely and avoid collisions. This constitutes the conversion of a security threat into a compulsory navigation service product that is simultaneously revenue-generating and drastically augments the technological dependency of vessels upon the host's infrastructures.

#### • Fifth implication: establishment of regional parametric insurance to break the monopoly of Western insurers

Presently, the primary artery controlling global shipping resides in Western insurance clubs (such as Lloyd's of London), which render traversal of the Strait costly through the elevation of premiums. The policymaker could, in collaboration with aligned blocs (such as China or Russia), create a decentralized parametric insurance platform. Within this model, risk coverage for vessels is determined not by the political assessments of Western corporations but, rather, by local sensor data and is executed automatically (with cryptocurrency payments). This measure represents the ultimate disarmament of the West's utilization of the insurance lever to control the arteries of energy and technology.

Within a global economy predicated upon data and computation, the significance of energy chokepoints has transcended their traditional role in the oil market. The Strait of Hormuz, within such a context, can be regarded as one of the nexus points connecting the geopolitics of energy with the geopolitics of technology. The comprehension of this paradigmatic shift, in conjunction with movement toward an intelligent, multidimensional governance reliant upon technological instruments, could elevate the standing of Iran within regional networks and global value chains. In the emergent order of the technology economy, the importance of geopolitical passageways will be defined not solely by the assurance of energy flow but, rather, by their role in sustaining the world's industrial and computational infrastructures.

The article was first published in Persian by Iran Think Tanks.



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People walk past a billboard referring to Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, in Tehran's Vanak Square on April 15, 2026.  
AFP



# Why Iran war failed to go as planned

## Tehran holds, Washington folds



By Allameh Azizi  
Director general  
of the Information  
Council of the Iranian  
Government

### OPINION

The developments following the 12-day war between Iran and Israel did not lead to de-escalation, but rather to a redefinition of the conflict on a much broader scale. While volatile negotiations between Tehran and Washington continued, the gap between the two sides' expectations deepened. Ultimately, this gap led to a decision at the White House based on an optimistic assessment: To enter a limited conflict and force Iran into a rapid retreat.

But the battlefield quickly shattered that assumption. The war that was meant to be short, controlled, and manageable turned into a 40-day war of attrition, one that not only failed to achieve the initial objectives of the United States but imposed heavy military, economic, and political costs. The key question is: What caused this deep disconnect between initial assessments and reality? To answer that question, this article focuses on pre-war miscalculations and decisive variables during the conflict.

#### 1. Incorrect generalisation of the 12-day war experience

Washington assumed Iran's behavioural pattern from the short war with Israel would repeat, but this time the level of direct US involvement was far higher. Iran adjusted its response accordingly, most notably by playing the Strait of Hormuz card. According to published reports from a US situation room meeting on February 12, General Keane, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned of the risks of closing the strait, but Trump rejected the general's assessment and assumed Iran would surrender before reaching that point. On the ground, however, the Strait of Hormuz became a decisive factor in disrupting both economic and military calculations.

#### 2. Neglecting Iran's strategic shift

The US still assumed Iran's main target would be Israel, but this time Tehran focused on US bases across the region. The UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Jordan were placed directly on Iran's target list.

#### 3. Miscalculating Iran's military and defensive capabilities

Iran's gradual advances in missile technology, operational precision and air defence systems were not sufficiently accounted for in Washington's calculations. The US did not believe Iran's air defences could down its fighter jets or that Iranian missiles could disable the advanced radars at Persian Gulf Arab states' bases. Battlefield develop-



Iranians gather in Enqelab Square in Tehran, Iran, to protest the Israeli and US attacks on their country, carrying flags of Iran and photos of their slain Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei, on March 30, 2026.  
● FATEMEH BAHRAMI/  
ANADOLU

ments revealed a real leap in Iran's offensive and defensive capabilities, imposing high costs on the US Air Force and seriously challenging its air superiority.

#### 4. Wrong predictions about Iran's domestic situation

One of Washington's key assumptions was the outbreak of instability or internal collapse. Intelligence reports from December led them astray, convincing Trump that with widespread assassinations and the activation of public protests, Iran lacked the necessary resilience. In practice, however, a state of war led to social cohesion and strengthened the spirit of resistance. The reason lies in the "civilisational variable", the role of historical identity and behavioural patterns within Iranian society, which, in

times of crisis, through modern activism and mass street presence, shape national resistance. Washington mistook a "battle for national survival" for "political protests".

#### 5. Underestimating the cohesion of the "axis of resistance"

The US expected Iran-aligned groups to play a marginal role, but their operational coordination drastically increased battlefield complexity. The "axis of resistance" lined up in a unified front against the US, while NATO failed to provide effective support for Washington, revealing fractures in Washington's traditional alliances when faced with costly crises.

#### 6. Growing domestic and international pressure

The continuation of the war was met with opposition inside the US — from media criticism by former Trump supporters and figures like Tucker Carlson to human rights protests over attacks on civilians, particularly the Minab school tragedy, which quickly eroded the moral le-

gitimacy of the operation in global public opinion, including within the US.

Meanwhile, the expansion of the war into the region caused oil prices to surge past \$120, raising serious concerns and analyses about \$200 oil, placing heavy economic pressure on US households.

On the international stage, the veto of Bahrain's proposed resolution by Russia and China, along with the independent stances of some Western allies, dramatically increased the political cost of the war for Washington.

#### 7. Signs of fractures within US military decision-making structures

Command disagreements grew increasingly severe. The widespread dismissal of senior generals — including the army chief of staff and several other commanders — in the middle of the war was like a major earthquake at the Pentagon. This was no simple administrative reshuffle; it reflected a deadlock in modern military doctrine, which negatively impacted opera-

tional continuity.

Taken together, these errors — from misreading Iran's behaviour and strategic evolution to ignoring simultaneous domestic and international pressures — placed the US in a position where accepting Iran's terms after 40 days to begin negotiations became the only realistic option.

In the end, this war stands as a clear example of strategic deadlock: Where the gap between optimistic initial estimates and battlefield realities fundamentally alters the course of events.

It is an experience that will likely be discussed and revisited for years to come in Washington's strategic circles.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

Satellite image from Planet Labs shows damage to the \$1.1 billion AN/FPS-132 phased array early warning radar at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar following a precise Iranian strike.  
● PLANET LABS



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# Iranian sport minister 'definitely opposed' to World Cup participation

## Sports Desk

Iranian Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali is "definitely opposed" to the country's national football team taking part in the upcoming FIFA World Cup – starting June 11 in the United States, Mexico, and Canada – though he said the Iranian government will have the final say on the matter.

His comments were the latest twist in the debate over Team Melli's participation in the global showpiece amid Iran's military conflict with the United States and Israel, which was triggered by airstrikes on Tehran on February 28 that assassinated the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and several military commanders.

Iran is set to kick off its Group G campaign against New Zealand at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, on June 15, before facing European heavyweight Belgium at the same venue six days later. The team will then travel to Seattle, Washington, to face Egypt in its final group game at



● FFIRI

Lumen Field on June 26. U.S. President Donald Trump said in the early stages of the ongoing war that he considers it not "appropriate" for Iranian players to visit his country "for their own life and safety," though FIFA chief

Gianni Infantino insisted last week that Iran will play "for sure" at the World Cup, arguing that "sports should be outside of politics."

"How can we have a sense of honor and, like so many, just say, 'Go ahead, play in

the World Cup'? We cannot remain indifferent to these criminal events for the sake of football, sports, or the World Cup," Donyamali said on Tuesday.

"Personally speaking, I am definitely opposed to Iran's participation. If there were

any sense of honor in international sports bodies, first, they would have stripped the United States of its World Cup hosting rights, and then they would have taken away the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics hosting rights.

"That's what happened with another country which had its entire sport suspended from international events within days after carrying out an attack on another country. Is such a double standard acceptable?" Donyamali said, in an apparent

reference to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

With the remainder of the Persian Gulf Pro League season postponed until the conclusion of Iran's World Cup run, a national team training camp – featuring 30 domestic top-flight players – began on Monday in Tehran, as head coach Amir Ghalenoei is eager to ensure his players retain their form despite the lack of competitive football.

"Professionally, I have to do everything I can to make sure the team is prepared. That's why all our efforts, as it stands, are focused on making the necessary preparations for the squad," Donyamali said.

"If the government gives the green light, we will play in the World Cup, but if it says the conditions are not right, we will not go. This is an understanding we have reached with the chairman of the Football Federation and Mr. Qalenoei: if we are to go, the players must be ready. The Iranian people, however, should know that we are doing this with hearts full of blood, and are not blind to their pain."

## Three-way battle for Iran's opposite spot heats up ahead of VNL

## Sports Desk

The three-horse race for Iran's opposite-spiker position is set to heat up in the coming weeks as the country gears up for a congested international volleyball season.

Italian head coach Roberto Piazza has named a provisional roster for the upcoming FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League (VNL), with prolific trio Amin Esmailnejad, Ali Hajjipour, and Bardia Saadat selected for the opposite role.

In his first year in charge, Piazza initially placed his trust in Esmailnejad, who repaid that faith with a standout performance in the VNL, cementing himself as Piazza's first-choice option.

Alongside him, Saadat made cameo contributions as Esmailnejad's backup during the VNL campaign and delivered an impressive showing. However, an unexpected injury to Esmailnejad on the

eve of September's World Championship altered the equation. Saadat, who had earlier been dropped from the roster, was recalled to the camp and became one of Iran's two primary options for the tournament alongside Hajjipour.

Hajjipour emerged as Piazza's top choice at the world event as anticipated, as Iran made it to the quarterfinals before being knocked out by Czechia. With an impressive performance, he was widely regarded as one of Iran's best players in the competition. The display significantly boosted the coaching staff's confidence in him, establishing Hajjipour as a key figure for the team's future. Now, ahead of the 2026 season, competition for the critical opposite role has entered a more serious phase. Having recovered from his injury, Esmailnejad is seeking to return to his best and regain the coach's trust. On the other side, Hajjipour



● FIVB  
Amin Esmailnejad, pictured during a game against Bulgaria at the 2025 Volleyball Nations League, is the top contender for Iran's opposite-spiker position.

boasts a strong position backed by his successful run with Foolad Sirjan in the Iranian top-flight league, while Saadat – coming off a

productive club season in Turkey – is highly motivated to secure his place in the starting lineup. Adding to the mix, emerg-

ing Iranian talent Amir-mohammad Golzadeh has thrown his name into contention as a new challenger. After a notable season

in Italy's Serie A with M&G Pallavolo, the young prospect now aims to challenge his more experienced rivals and earn a spot on the national team's final roster for the Nations League – setting the stage for a heated and decisive battle over this key position.

Iran will look to secure its first VNL quarterfinal berth in four years when it opens its campaign against South American heavyweight Brazil in Brasilia on June 10, followed by tricky tests against Bulgaria, Argentina and Belgium in Week 1 of the preliminary stage.

The Asian powerhouse will then visit Orleans, France, for the second week of action, starting with a mammoth task against the host and reigning Olympic champion France on June 24. This will be followed by matches against the United States (June 25), Japan (June 26), and Cuba (June 28).

The third and final week of

the preliminaries will see Iran go head-to-head with Ukraine in Belgrade on July 15, with further tests against Germany (July 16), Slovenia (July 17), and Türkiye (July 19).

The top eight teams in the 18-team standings will progress to the VNL Finals, which will begin in Ningbo Beilun, China, on July 29. China is already guaranteed a place in the quarterfinals as the host. Piazza's men will also chase a fifth Asian Championship title in eight editions from September 4 in Fukuoka, Japan.

Beyond continental glory, additional incentive awaits in Fukuoka as the tournament winner will secure direct qualification to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

A potential showdown between Iran and Japan could follow at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games, which begin on September 19, where Piazza's side will be chasing a fourth consecutive men's gold medal.

## Asian Beach Games:

# Iran off to flyer in beach handball

## Sports Desk

Iran enjoyed a flying start to its men's beach handball campaign at the 2026 Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, defeating the Philippines 2-0 in Group A on Tuesday.

Mahdi Qashqaei's men won the first period 14-10 before taking the second 21-20 to secure victory in Iran's maiden handball appearance in six editions of the event.

"The first match is always a crucial one for any team, but we had a good training pro-

cess over the past 10 days," Qashqaei said. "The National Olympic Committee made great efforts to get the team to Sanya early. We had regular training sessions and a good friendly match, so we were able to face our first opponents in favorable condition." "The Philippines are a quality, strong Asian team. They have been in beach handball for years and have always achieved good results in various competitions. But today, the players implemented the plans we had in training and

reiterated before the match very well on the court, and that allowed us to secure the 2-0 win," added the Iranian coach. Iran will play Sri Lanka on Friday in its second group outing. The group also features hosts China, as well as Bahrain, India, and Hong Kong. "Sri Lanka is relatively unknown and has little track record in Asia. But we are gathering the necessary information, analyzing their matches, and then executing

the required plans in training so that we can achieve our objectives in this match as well," Qashqaei said of Friday's opponent.

The top two teams in the group will advance to the final round, beginning with the semifinals next Tuesday.

Iran will be represented by 57 athletes across 10 sports – beach wrestling, beach volleyball, beach handball, beach soccer, jiu-jitsu, beach kabbadi, athletics, 3x3 basketball, sport climbing, and water polo. The Games officially began with the opening ceremony on Wednesday, returning after a decade-long hiatus following the 2016 edition in Da Nang, Vietnam.



● IRIHF  
Iranian beach handball players celebrate their victory against the Philippines at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, on April 21, 2026.

# Neyshabur's turquoise treasure remains largely untapped

## Iranica Desk

The name Neyshabur is woven into the fabric of Iran's history with civilization, art, mysticism, and the unique brilliance of turquoise. This ancient land has long been renowned not only for the tombs of celebrated poets such as Omar Khayyam and Attar but also as one of the country's richest regions for the extraction and processing of precious and semi-precious stones, especially turquoise.

Neyshabur turquoise, with its distinctive azure blue color and unique veins, has always been a symbol of beauty and authenticity, bringing significant cultural, economic, and tourism value to the region. At first glance, one would imagine that a city with such a brilliant history and abundant natural capacities would lie at the beating heart of Iran's – and even the world's – gemstone industry, ISNA wrote.

However, the current realities of the gemstone and mining industry in Neyshabur paint a different and often concerning picture. Despite its immense potential, the industry struggles with numerous challenges that prevent its full flourishing. One of the primary and most deep-rooted problems is centralization. This centralization, both at the national and provincial levels, has meant that major decisions, resource allocation, and policymaking are concentrated in the capital or provincial centers, leaving cities like Neyshabur – despite their unique capacities – deprived of necessary attention. This approach has led to the marginalization of Neyshabur from many national and provincial opportunities and has squandered development prospects that could boost the industry and the region. When discussing the gemstone industry, Neyshabur should not be seen merely as a mining site; rather, the region has the history and potential to become a hub for processing, design, and even education and research in the gemstone field. Its geographical location, access to skilled and motivated labor, and, most importantly, its rich natural reserves are all factors that could elevate Neyshabur to a special place in the gemstone industry's value chain. But this dream remains unattainable as long as policies



● eac.bndccim.com

are not based on decentralization and the empowerment of local regions. The director of the Neyshabur Turquoise Mine has called for a revision of managerial and executive approaches, stating that centralization at the provincial level – similar to centralization at the national level – has created significant problems. Hamed Fazliani emphasized that this issue is the main obstacle to the true flourishing of the gemstone industry in counties like Neyshabur. He explained, "In the overall gemstone cycle, there are about 12 main stages, from exploration and extraction at the mine to final market supply. But unfortunately, policies and attention have largely focused on the retail and

final market supply sector."

He noted that this approach has shifted the focus of activities, investments, and decision-making to the provincial capital, Mashhad, while the actual and potential capacities of the counties – the very roots of this industry – are ignored. Fazliani pointed to the "World Gemstone Capital" designation awarded to Mashhad and lamented the missed opportunity for Neyshabur. "Unfortunately all facilities, allocated budgets, and scientific and commercial events remained concentrated in the provincial center. Meanwhile, cities like Neyshabur and other main centers of gemstone production and processing in the province did not benefit from this immense capacity, and this national opportunity was effectively limited to a regional one," he said. He identified one of the key demands of activists in Neyshabur's gemstone industry as the selection of this city as the provincial secretariat for gemstones. "It doesn't matter under which executive body or government organization this secretariat operates; what matters is that its location be Neyshabur. This

step could play an important role in the fair distribution of facilities and opportunities across the province and allow Neyshabur to play its pivotal role in this industry."

He also pointed to weaknesses in mineral exploration. "Geologically, Khorasan Razavi Province is very similar to Kerman Province, which has several large industrial mines. But due to a severe lack of subsurface exploration and insufficient investment in this sector, no major mine has yet been established in the province," he said. He added that Neyshabur University has the scientific and executive potential to conduct such explorations, which could be carried out within the county itself using local forces.

Referring to the numerous challenges facing mines in Neyshabur, Fazliani noted the poor condition of most small and medium-sized mines. He criticized governments' purely revenue-driven approach to the mining sector.

"In the previous government, we saw a several-fold increase in state mining royalties, which resulted in a large number of mines ceasing operations

and shutting down. Currently, of about 100 registered mines in Neyshabur, less than 50 percent are active; the rest are either closed or operating at very low capacity," he said.

He said other problems have also created a crisis for mines. These include severe aging of mining machinery and equipment, lack of proper implementation or facilitation of regulations concerning the import of mining machinery, and the elimination or untimely allocation of required fuel. In recent months, a serious problem in the supply, production, and delivery of explosives has caused major difficulties for mines. Continuation of this trend will lead to a sharp decline in production across all mines.

Although the name Neyshabur is intertwined with the brilliance of its turquoise, and the fame of its precious stone extraction and cutting has spread worldwide for centuries, this immense potential has unfortunately been neglected for years under the shadow of centralized perspectives and inconsistent policies. It has failed to achieve its rightful place in the country's economic and industrial geography. It is as if Neyshabur – despite possessing the richest turquoise reserves and brilliant human talents – is condemned to watch other regions and industries flourish while it grapples with fundamental challenges. In the heart of the southern foothills of the Binalud Mountains, near the village of Ma'dan-e Olya, approximately 60 kilometers from Neyshabur, lies the world's largest and highest-quality turquoise mine. This mining area, covering an estimated expanse of about 40 square kilometers, is filled with numerous tunnels that house valuable turquoise treasures. Today, Neyshabur's gemstone industry needs transformation and innovation more than ever. On one hand, traditional extraction methods and aging equipment have reduced productivity and increased costs. On the other, insufficient investment in modern exploration has limited accessible reserves and darkened the long-term outlook for raw material supply. To these challenges, one must add administrative and legal problems, each of which, in its own way, stands as an obstacle to the flourishing of this industry.

## Siba; ancient city buried beneath modern Kukherd

### Iranica Desk

The ancient city of Siba, located in the southwestern part of Kukherd, Hormozgan Province, faces numerous threats including modern residential construction, a road cutting through its heart, and a seasonal river that has exposed buried structures — most notably the historic Siba Bathhouse, which emerged following upstream floods and was excavated in 2012.

Library research, field surveys, and archaeogeophysical data indicate that while peripheral evidence suggests pre-Islamic human settlements, surface pottery studies cast doubt on the direct attribution of the Siba site to the pre-Islamic era. What is visible today at the site includes the Siba Bathhouse to the east and a cemetery area to the west.

In the western section lies the Boonjeroon neighborhood, an area with a stone



● mrbilit.com

residential fabric where all structures have been built using river pebbles of various sizes. The Do-Gonbadan tomb and the grave of a Sunni elder are also located within this area, chn.ir wrote. To the south of the site, only a sparse scattering of pottery shards can be seen. To the north, the asphalted Kukherd-Harang road cuts directly through the historical area, raising the likelihood that a

portion of the ancient city has been lost. Beyond the road, numerous water reservoirs and new buildings have been constructed. Pottery samples collected during surveys predominantly belong to the Middle Islamic period, and structures such as the bathhouse and tombs also date to the Islamic era. Based on the analysis of this data, while settlement in this region during pre-Islamic times — par-

ticularly the Sassanid period — is possible, the Siba site in its current form is primarily an Islamic site, and attributing it to the Sasanian period remains problematic.

According to archaeological findings, it appears that present-day Kukherd was built upon the remains of the historical city of Siba, especially given the evidence found in the southern, eastern, and western areas of the modern

village. The name of this region appears in later Islamic sources, particularly from the Safavid period, and is also mentioned in travelogues — an indication of its commercial position and strategic importance.

The Siba site covers approximately 45 hectares and is situated on sedimentary land whose surface is covered with pebbles. The historic Siba Bathhouse is of the underground type,

meaning its floor and walls were constructed by excavating into the earth. Such a method not only increased the structural strength but also helped retain heat during the cold winter days.

The bathhouse's environmental conditioning system, like other traditional Iranian bathhouses, was designed so that temperature and humidity levels gradually increased from the entrance vestibule



● kojara.com

and the Bineh (a semi-warm, semi-humid area) to the main hall and Garmkhaneh (hot room, warm and humid), and finally to the water reservoir (Khazineh), which was very hot and very humid. Each of these spaces was built independently and connected to one another by narrow corridors.

Despite its vast expanse, rich historical background, and rare architectural structures, the ancient site of Siba remains among the lesser-known archaeological sites of Hormozgan Province. The exposure of part of its buried structures, including the historic bathhouse, represents only a glimpse of the research and tourism potential of this region.

Protection of this site and the execution of systematic excavations could illuminate new horizons in the history of southern Iran and more accurately represent the role of Kukherd and Siba on the cultural map of Hormozgan.

# Tehran int'l book fair to go online due to wartime disruption



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran will hold the seventh edition of the virtual Tehran International Book Fair in late May, after wartime disruptions and the temporary shutdown of some publishing units made it difficult for many publishers to plan for a physical presence at the country's flagship literary event. The decision was finalized at the policy council meeting of the Tehran International Book Fair, held last week, the Public Relations Office of the Culture Ministry's Deputy for Cultural Affairs said in a statement, IRNA reported. Mohsen Javadi, deputy minister for cultural affairs and head of the exhibition, said the online-only format was adopted in light of the country's "special conditions" and to support the resilience of Iran's publishing industry. "A significant number of publishers were unable to prepare for physical participation," the statement said, citing the atmo-

sphere created by the imposed war and the closure of some publishing-related businesses. The Tehran International Book Fair is one of the largest cultural events in West Asia, drawing hundreds of domestic and foreign publishers each year. The virtual fair, first launched in January 2021 after the cancellation of the 33rd Tehran International Book Fair during the coronavirus pandemic, has since become a key platform for publishers and readers nationwide. Its third through sixth editions were held alongside the in-person fair each May from 2022 to 2025. In a parallel support measure, the ministry said it will roll out a nationwide seasonal bookshop purchasing scheme in June to help brick-and-mortar bookstores benefit from state-backed incentives. Further details on publisher registration and reader subsidies, including book vouchers and purchase grants, will be announced soon, officials said.

## Iranian children shine at painting exhibition in Bulgaria

### Arts & Culture Desk

Ten young Iranian artists from the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults won top honors at the 27th International Painting Exhibition "Nava Zagora" 2025 in Bulgaria, the institute's public relations office said on Wednesday. Nine-year-old Selen Arami from Ahvaz, in Iran's southwestern Khuzestan Province, clinched the "Sun of Nova Zagora" medal and an honorary diploma at the annual international showcase.



Nine other Iranian children and teenagers also secured honorary diplomas, showing the country's growing footprint in global youth arts competitions. The winners included 15-year-old Kimia Mousavi from Tabriz in East Azarbaijan Province; 15-year-old Hadis Salimi from

Ardabil; 7-year-old Karen Mohammadi from Isfahan; 11-year-old Aylin Chengovayi from Behbahan in Khuzestan Province; 11-year-old Aria Bahadori from Safashahr in Fars Province; 14-year-old Atena Amirian and 14-year-old Matina Khateri from Kermanshah; 15-year-old Mahdia Badi' from Gonbad-e Kavus in Golestan Province; and 9-year-old Mohammad Hossein Hemmati from Yazd. The Iranian institute submitted 15 artworks to the 2025 edition of the Nova Zagora exhibition, with two-thirds of them earning recognition.

## King Raam to stage first post-war concert

### Arts & Culture Desk

The first major live music concert in Tehran since the suspension of cultural events in March and early April following attacks by US and Israeli forces, which began on February 28, will be held from April 24 to 27 in Tehran, as Iranian post-punk artist King Raam prepares to take the stage in a symbolic return of public performance to the capital. The event is being produced by Sajjad Afsharian. The production team includes performers Mohammad Shariat, Taha Mazaheri, Erfan Aseminejad and Faraz Kes-

hvari, alongside sound engineer Sassan Bakhshi and graphic designer Amir Sedaghati. Born in the southern city of Bushehr in 1981, King Raam, whose real name is Ramin Seyed Emami, first rose to prominence as lead singer of Hypernova in Tehran before relocating with the band to New York City in 2006. He later launched a solo career, releasing albums including 'Songs of the Wolves,' 'The Vulture' and 'Until A Thousand and ...', and previously performed in Tehran in 2015 in the stage production 'Scarlet from 1980s' along with Afsharian.



## Blast waves vs. blue domes

# Iran's heritage endures cracks, yet St. Stepanos Church rises as a Nowruz beacon

By Sadeq Dehqan  
 Staff writer

## INTERVIEW

The US and the Zionist regime's aggression against Iran, beyond inflicting human and infrastructure losses, did not spare the country's cultural heritage, with a number of historic sites and cultural landmarks sustaining damage in the strikes. East Azarbaijan Province, one of Iran's key tourism hubs, home to a wealth of valuable historical monuments and sites, was no exception. While reports indicate no direct hits on the province's heritage assets to date, blasts in close proximity to several sites have raised red flags about the vulnerability of this invaluable legacy. Meanwhile, this year's Nowruz, coinciding with wartime conditions alongside continued domestic travel, shaped a distinct tourism landscape, with some of East Azarbaijan's flagship destinations, including St. Stepanos Church, landing on the list of the country's most-visited attractions. To assess the condition of dam-

aged heritage sites in East Azarbaijan and review the province's Nowruz travel trends, we sat down with Vahid Navadad, Deputy for Cultural Heritage of East Azarbaijan. The full interview follows:

**IRAN DAILY: Regarding the recent war, can you walk us through the damage inflicted on East Azarbaijan's historical sites as a result of enemy attacks?**  
**NAVADAD:** Throughout the war, up to April 21, no direct strikes on historical buildings or sites within East Azarbaijan Province have been reported. However, in areas near our heritage sites, explosions have occurred, and the resulting shockwaves and vibrations have caused damage to some historical structures and sites. Since the outset of the Ramadan war on February 28, my colleagues at the provincial Cultural Heritage Department have been monitoring all historical sites on a daily basis and filing regular reports.

**Specifically, what damage has been reported so far?**  
 Reports to date indicate that two historical buildings were affected: The Blue Dome of Maragheh, a Seljuk-era structure dating back

to the 6th century AH in the city of Maragheh, and the Salmasi House in Tabriz, which dates to the mid-Qajar period and in recent years has also functioned as the Tabriz Measurement Museum. The damage stems from blast waves on March 10, when explosions occurred near these sites in Tabriz and Maragheh, resulting in minor damage. Initial reports on Salmasi House point to cracks in the structure. Field inspections confirm fissures in the building, and a prominent orosi (traditional sash window) there has also sustained partial damage. Immediate protective measures have been taken, and restoration planning is underway. The Blue Dome of Maragheh is a highly valuable monument in the historic city of Maragheh, which is known for its iconic domes. Blast waves from enemy attacks caused parts of its decorative elements to detach, including sections of tilework and brick ornamentation. The extent of the damage is currently under preliminary assessment, and further studies are needed to determine the appropriate restoration approach. Structurally, no issues have been reported so far, but detailed evaluations are ongoing to fully ascertain the

scope of the damage.  
**Has any estimate of the damage been made?**  
 A preliminary numerical estimate has been prepared, but until comprehensive studies are completed, it's not possible to provide precise figures. In line with directives from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts an initial report has been compiled and will be reviewed by the provincial technical council. The findings will then be submitted to the ministry.

**Since the outbreak of the war and these explosions, have these sites remained open to visitors?**  
 From February 28 (the start of the war), under a directive from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts all museums under its supervision were shut down. However, given the overlap with Nowruz, arrangements were made to keep certain non-museum historical sites and complexes open where feasible so the public could visit. As for the two damaged sites, specific measures were introduced from March 10. The Blue Dome, located within a historical field, remains open to visi-



tors. However, the Tabriz Measurement Museum, i.e., Salmasi House, has been closed since February 28.  
**What was the state of tourism in East Azarbaijan during the war, which coincided with the Nowruz holidays?**  
 For the holiday period, necessary arrangements were made across the province to facilitate public visits to certain sites and historical buildings. Despite wartime conditions, travel to the province during Nowruz was significant. In fact, St. Stepanos Church in Jolfa ranked as the third most-visited site nationwide during Nowruz. I believe

Fin Garden in Kashan and Shazdeh Garden in Mahan, Kerman, ranked first and second, respectively.  
**What do the statistics say about Nowruz tourists in the province?**  
 We saw a mixed picture. Overnight stays in formal accommodation centers such as hotels dropped sharply. However, overall travel volumes were notable compared to last year, as people from Tehran and other regions sought to get away from the wartime atmosphere and showed strong interest in traveling to East Azarbaijan for visits and holiday stays.