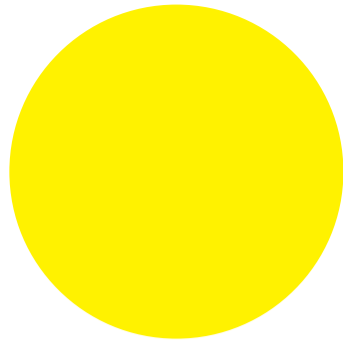


International Workers' Day
President: Iran's progress depends on laborers' dignity, job security

8 >



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> irandaily.ir

| newspaper.irandaily.ir

| IranDailyWeb

Iran floats new initiative via Pakistan amid stalled US talks

2 >

Leader: Iran to determine 'new legal rules' in Strait of Hormuz
Persian Gulf's future 'bright' and without US presence

2 >



The undated photo shows an Iranian oil tanker in the Persian Gulf.
● SHANA



Steel producers urge power exemptions amid war damage, market risks

3 >



Chabahar project on track despite sanctions, benefiting regional trade

3 >



Iran and Russia are gaming United States and winning

OPINION

4 >



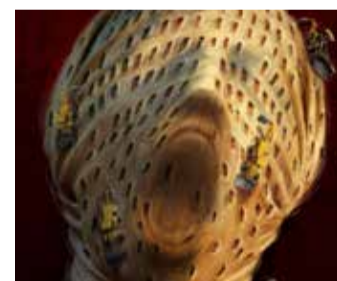
Ancient Achaemenid seal reveals early Persian naval power

7 >



Infantino tells FIFA Congress Iran will play at World Cup as planned

6 >



'Silent Scream' poster unveiled to commemorate Minab school victims

8 >



Leader: Iran to determine 'new legal rules' in Strait of Hormuz

Persian Gulf's future 'bright' and without US presence

International Desk

Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, declared the dawn of a "new chapter" for the strategic waterway, asserting that Iran will implement new management rules over the Strait of Hormuz following recent US-Israeli aggression against the country.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a message on Thursday marking National Persian Gulf Day. On April 30, Iran annually commemorates its historic 1622 triumph over colonial occupation along its southern coastline.

This year's observance comes exactly two months after the US and Israeli regime launched an unprovoked military aggression against Iran on February 28. Ayatollah Khamenei described the Persian Gulf as an "irreplaceable blessing" for the Muslim nations of the region, noting that this body of water and the Strait of Hormuz have "shaped a part of our identity and civilization and, in addition to being a connecting point for nations, create a vital and unique route for the global economy."

"This strategic asset has provoked the

greed of many devils in past centuries, and the history of repeated aggressions by European and American foreigners, insecurities, damages, and numerous threats to the countries of the region are only a fraction of the ominous plots of the world's arrogant powers against the inhabitants of the Persian Gulf region, the latest example of which was the recent thuggery of the Great Satan," he added, referring to the US-Israeli aggression on Iran which began on February 28.

Possessing the longest land coast of the Persian Gulf, he continued, the Iranian nation has made "the greatest sacrifices for the independence of the Persian Gulf and the confrontation with foreigners and aggressors; from the expulsion of the Portuguese and the liberation of the Strait of Hormuz to the struggle against Dutch colonialism and the epics of resistance against British colonialism, and so on."

The Islamic Revolution, he stressed, has been a "turning point of these resistances in severing the hands of the arrogant powers from the Persian Gulf region."

"Today, two months after the largest military expedition and aggression by the world's bullies in the region and Ameri-



Three people are seen on the rocky beach of Iran's Kish Island in the Persian Gulf in a picture published by Tasnim News Agency on the occasion of the National Persian Gulf Day on April 30, 2026.

● TASNIM

ca's humiliating defeat in its plot, a new chapter for the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz is unfolding," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

The Leader noted that nations of the region witnessed the "vigilance" of the Iranian naval forces in the past 60 days.

"The nations of the Persian Gulf region, who for many years had grown accustomed to the silence and submissiveness of their rulers in the face of bullies and aggressors, have witnessed with their own eyes over the past sixty days the beautiful manifestations of solidarity, vigilance, and endeavor by the brave men of the naval forces of the Army and the IRGC, alongside the zeal and gallantry of the people and youth of the southern region of dear Iran, in rejecting foreign domination," he wrote.

Following the latest imposed war on Iran, it has been "proven not only among glob-



al public opinion and the nations of the region, but even to the rulers of countries, that the presence of American foreigners and their nesting and establishing footholds in the lands of the Persian Gulf is the most important factor of insecurity in the region," he added.

"America's hollow bases do not even have the endurance and capability to secure

themselves, let alone there being any hope for America to secure its regional dependents," highlighted the Leader as Iran's retaliatory missile and drone strikes devastated US bases in the region during the 40-day war.

He noted that the future of the Persian Gulf will be "bright" and without the presence of the US.

Pezeshkian conditions talks revival on US shift from 'maximalist' stance

US advised to drop 'inflammatory' rhetoric, 'provocative' actions

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian told Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi that Iran is ready to resume diplomacy if the United States drops its "maximalist" demands and stops its "maritime piracy" against Iranian ships in the Persian Gulf.

Pezeshkian said the US and Israeli regime committed war crimes against the Iranian nation during the recent war of aggression, by assassinating Leader of the Islamic Revolution and senior political and military officials, and attacking vital public infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and safeguarded nuclear facilities.

These actions were clear examples of war crimes and violations of international law, he added. The president also noted that the provocative measures by Washington in imposing an illegal blockade on Iranian ports were unacceptable and in breach of international regulations. "These actions will further escalate the situation in the region," he said. Reiterating that the Iranian Armed Forces are determined to defend the legitimate rights of the country, Pezeshkian said Tehran was nonetheless ready to resume the diplomatic process aimed at finding a "fair resolution" to the war and restoring



Sanae Takaichi

Masoud Pezeshkian

Alexander Lukashenko

peace and security to the region. He stressed that achieving that goal was contingent upon the US abandoning its "maximalist approach" and stopping its "provocative actions."

In turn, the Japanese premier called for efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region through diplomacy.

She also asked for the safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz for ships of all nations after a recent passage of a Japanese ship through the strait. Takaichi said Japan views bilateral relations with Iran as important and expressed hope that negotiations between Tehran and Washington would resume soon and lead to an agreement.

Also on Thursday, the Iranian president held a phone conversation with his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko.

Pezeshkian said Iran's trust in the US has been "completely destroyed" after

two US and Israeli military strikes on Iran during negotiations, and called on Washington to halt "provocative" rhetoric and actions.

"Efforts to resolve differences through dialogue and diplomacy with Iran's responsibility have always been on the agenda," Pezeshkian said. "But during the negotiations, the United States and the Zionist regime attacked Iran twice, and there is a possibility of such actions being repeated - which has led to Iran's complete distrust of the United States."

Pezeshkian said Iran needs to see a halt to "inflammatory rhetoric" by US officials and "provocative actions" as a prerequisite for building Iranian confidence. He urged Washington to demonstrate seriousness in pursuing negotiations aimed at a definitive end to the war and not repeating past experiences.

Iran floats new initiative via Pakistan amid stalled US talks

International Desk

Iran delivered a new proposal for peace talks with the US via mediator Pakistan, with negotiations between the two sides frozen despite a weeks-long ceasefire.

According to a report by IRNA on Friday, the text of the proposal was handed over to Islamabad on Thursday evening.

The war, launched by the United States and Israel with a vast wave of surprise strikes on February 28 has been on hold since April 8, but only one failed round of direct talks has taken place between Iranian and US representatives.

In the meantime, Iran has maintained its stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz while the United States has imposed a counterblockade on Iranian ports.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday that US President Donald Trump had told security officials to prepare for the blockade to last months, causing oil prices to spike.

Despite the failure to negotiate an end to the war, the ceasefire has held.

On Friday, Judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said, "The Islamic Republic has never shied away from negotiations." Ejei, however, said, "We certainly do not

accept imposition," in a video shared by the Judiciary's Mizan Online website.

Tehran, though, does not want a return to war, he said.

"We do not welcome war in any way; we do not want war, we do not want its continuation."

Since the failure of the first round of the negotiations in Pakistan, regional countries have been trying to get the US and Iran to the second round of negotiations. Iran refused to participate in the second round due to the US violation of a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire by imposing a blockade on Iran's ports.

Iranian officials have also blamed the US side for putting forward excessive demands and shifting its position at the negotiating table for the failure of the first negotiations.

Washington, meanwhile, is gripped by a legalistic debate over whether Trump had passed a deadline for requesting congressional approval for his war with Iran.

Administration officials, including defense secretary Pete Hegseth, insisted that the ceasefire meant that the clock was paused on a 60-day deadline requiring the president to seek war powers authorization from Congress.

Tehran urges accountability for states complicit in US-Israeli onslaught

International Desk

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Amir-Saeid Irvani reiterated that all governments that played a role in the illegal aggression by the US and Israel against Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be held accountable.

Irvani made the remarks in a letter addressed to the UN chief and the Security Council president on Thursday in response to anti-Iran letters sent by six Arab countries, including, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan, to the world body.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates once again its clear and consistent position that all States whose internationally wrongful acts have played a role in the United States' and the Israeli regime's aggression against its sovereignty and terri-

torial integrity must be held accountable," he said.

Irvani also stressed that the Persian Gulf littoral states are under an obligation to make full reparation to the Islamic Republic of Iran, including compensation for all material and moral damage caused by their internationally wrongful acts.

He warned of threats to international peace and security amid the continued failure of the UN Security Council to address the unlawful use of force by the US and the Israeli regime, as well as the complicity of states that have either facilitated or directly participated in the military assault.

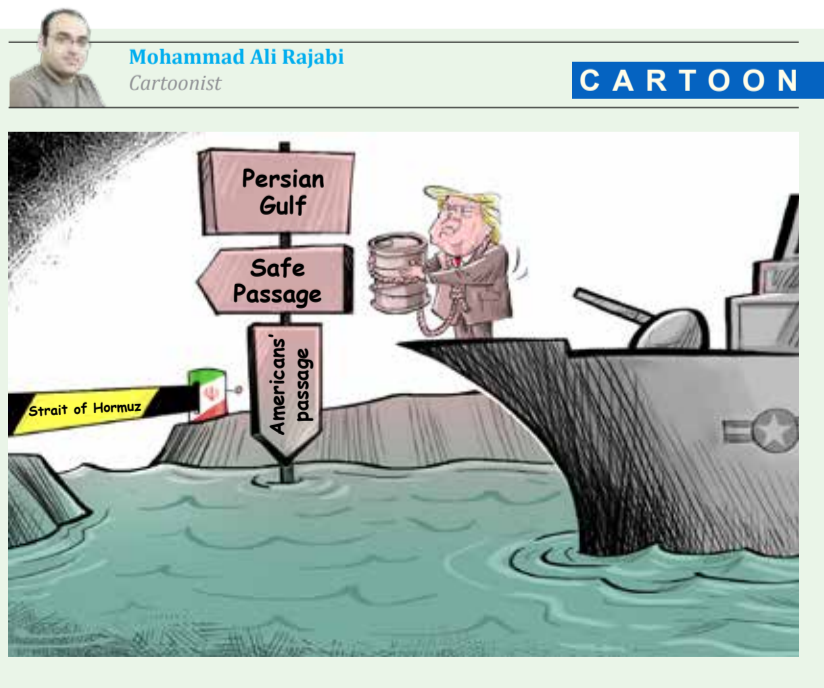
The envoy categorically rejected as unfounded and unsubstantiated the anti-Iran claims made by the six Arab countries regarding the premeditated and unprovoked US-Israeli aggression that killed more than 3,375 people and

damaged over 125,630 civilian structures across the country.

Attempting to distort the factual and legal context, the aforesaid countries falsely attributed responsibility for the war to Iran, which has been the target of the savage war of aggression, he added.

Irvani highlighted the complicity of Arab countries in the US-Israeli attacks against Iran, citing assessments conducted by the Iranian armed forces, along with the recent statement by the commander of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), Admiral Brad Cooper, who recently hailed Bahrain, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan for being "exceptional teammates."

He noted that the failure of the Security Council to uphold Iran's legitimate right of self-defense does not negate the nation's inherent right of self-defense under general international law.



Chabahar project on track despite sanctions, benefiting regional trade

Economy Desk

The Chabahar project has never been halted and continues to move forward steadily despite sanctions, Iran's Ambassador to India Mohammad Fathali has told India's CNN-News18 in an exclusive interview, calling media reports speculative.

Fathali said Tehran is continuing to advance the development of Chabahar Port despite sanctions, stressing its strategic importance for regional connectivity and trade.

He said Iran believes economic and development cooperation, particularly major regional projects such as Chabahar, should not be affected by "unilateral approaches and illegal sanctions."

The ambassador described Chabahar as a project of regional and international significance, playing a key role in enhancing connectivity, especially for India's access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

He added that Iran is seriously pursuing its southeastern port's development and sees its benefits extending beyond Iran and India to other countries in the region.

India secured a six-month US waiver in November to continue operating Chabahar Port, easing concerns over its investment and potential sanctions exposure. The move followed Washington's September decision to revoke a waiver in place since 2018. India has supplied equipment worth \$25 million and shipped food via the port. In May 2024, it signed a 10-year deal with Iran to develop and operate Chabahar, committing \$120 million and offering a further \$250 million



A cargo ship is docked in the Shahid Beheshti terminal in the southeastern Iranian coastal city of Chabahar, on the Gulf of Oman.
● IRNA

credit line for infrastructure. Bloomberg News reported in April that officials were seeking an extension of the waiver, though rising tensions between Washington and Tehran have complicated prospects.

Rail link nears completion

Fathali also noted that the Chabahar-Zahedan railway, a key component of the port's transit capacity, has reached 90% physical progress, with rail-laying operations in the Chabahar section expected to be completed by mid-June, linking the port to Iran's national railway network. He also said improvements in public

services, including the construction of a hospital and development of hotels, are expected to be completed by August or September 2026, helping transform the area into a sustainable economic and social hub.

Noting that Tehran remains open to dialogue with the US, Fathali stressed that no official details of any new proposal have been released. He underlined that Iran seeks "durable and lasting peace" rather than a cycle of war and ceasefire, asserting that Tehran's non-negotiable red lines include its right to peaceful nuclear energy under the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the lifting of

"unjust" sanctions.

Over the past 47 years, the envoy said, "the US and its allies have exerted extensive pressure on the Iranian people through the harshest and most inhumane sanctions."

"The freezing of billions of dollars of Iran's assets, medical sanctions that endangered the lives of millions of our citizens, the prevention of purchasing new aircraft, and even restrictions on the import of aircraft parts are only part of these unjust policies aimed at pressuring the Iranian people" he told the Indian English-language news television channel.

"Even now, by deploying military vessels to the region and stationing the most advanced military equipment, they seek to confront our people simply because Iran wants to remain an independent country and preserve its national dignity," he said.

Safe passage for Indian ships through Hormuz

On ensuring safe passage for Indian vessels through the Strait of Hormuz amid rising US-Iran tensions, Fathali said Iran remained committed to maritime security in line with international regulations.

"We have stated that vessels belonging to countries that have not participated in the US-Israeli aggression against Iran may continue to pass through the Strait of Hormuz."

In this regard, our friendly countries, including India, face no restrictions in transiting the Strait of Hormuz. So far, several Indian vessels have passed through this route with full security, and this process will continue in the future.

Naturally, for better management of the situation, certain regulations have been established for passage through the strait, and all vessels are required to comply with them. However, Iran has demonstrated the utmost cooperation and flexibility toward Indian vessels and those of other non-participating countries.

Steel producers urge power exemptions amid war damage, market risks

Economy Desk

Iran's alloy steel producers urged the government to exempt steel plants from electricity consumption restrictions this year, citing production disruptions at major facilities following recent US and Israeli attacks and warning of broader risks to the domestic market.

In a letter addressed to the ministers of industry and energy, the Iranian Alloy Steel Producers Association said output had halted at major plants, including Mobarakeh Steel Company and Khuzestan Steel Company, and called for uninterrupted power supply to help stabilize production and offset losses.

"The halt in production at major steel plants has posed an unprecedented threat to market stability, downstream industries and related businesses," the association said in the letter, according to IRNA. "Under such conditions, the only way to preserve the supply chain and prevent market collapse is the continuous operation of steel units, especially alloy steel producers."

The group said imposing electricity restrictions — including outages, load shifting or demand cuts — would undermine efforts to replace lost output, deepen liquidity pressures and push companies into severe financial distress, with potentially irreversible consequences for the broader steel sector.

It added that maintaining uninterrupted production, particularly in alloy steel plants, would support economic activity, stabilize the market and ensure the supply of critical inputs across industrial



chains. The Iranian ministries of Energy and Industry, Mine and Trade coordinated efforts to secure a stable electricity supply for industrial units and ease consumption curbs during the summer peak demand period, following a joint meeting between senior deputies from both bodies on Friday. Deputy Energy Minister Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi said electricity curbs on industries would be reduced this summer compared to last year to help minimize disruptions to production.

Planned remedial measures

According to Mehr news agency, Iran's steel industry has been moving toward recovery two weeks after a 40-day war, with producers maintaining at least baseline output through crisis management and domestic capabilities.

Vahid Yaqoubi, a member of the steel association, proposed measures to support recovery, including deferring tax and bank

liabilities, facilitating slab imports without foreign currency transfers, and bartering a surplus of 12 million tons of iron ore pellets for other inputs.

He said the sector accounts for 5.5% of Iran's gross domestic product and 11% of non-oil exports, equivalent to \$7.7 billion, underscoring its critical role in the economy.

According to Mehdi Mohammadi, head of the Iranian Alloy Steel Producers Association, Iran produced 7.26 million tons of steel in the first quarter of 2026, maintaining its position as the world's 10th largest producer.

Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC), based in the central province of Isfahan, and Khuzestan Steel Company in the 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.

Western sanctions on Iran, along with damage from recent military attacks on production infrastructure, have further intensified challenges facing the sector.

According to the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade, Mobarakeh Steel Company has been tasked with supplying steel sheets to downstream and affiliated companies through imports at prices approved by the Organization for Supporting Consumers and Producers. The ministry is also pursuing the approach of increasing steel production capacity in the country.

Post-war modernization drive

Separately, a senior provincial official said a roadmap had been drafted to modernize Iran's steel industry, with a focus on higher value-added and lower-emission products.

Kourosh Khosravi, deputy for economic affairs at the Isfahan governor-general's office, said Mobarakeh Steel was shifting toward advanced and low-pollution products as part of a broader post-war restructuring strategy.

He said the plan aims to move away from raw material exports toward high-value steel products and eventually position Iran as an exporter of steel technology, including products such as electrical, coated and stainless-steel sheets, which are currently largely imported.

Khosravi added that after three decades of activity, the industry is seeking to transition from a product supplier to a technology exporter, building on capabilities already demonstrated in overseas contracting projects.

Prolonged Internet outages push Iran's digital economy to brink

Economy Desk

Iran's digital economy has entered a period of structural instability due to prolonged Internet outages, with around 2,000 online companies able to withstand only one to two more months of disruption, according to Reza Olfat-Nasab, head of the Iranian Union of Virtual Businesses.

Speaking to KhabarOnline, Olfat-Nasab said the digital sector has faced a series of consecutive crises over the past year, placing heavy pressure on online businesses. He argued that the situation can no longer be viewed as merely a technical disruption, but must be regarded as a structural issue within the country's economy.

Olfat-Nasab warned of the consequences of continued Internet disruptions, noting that sales at some online businesses have fallen by as much as 70%.

Over the past year, Iran's Internet has been disrupted for more than 100 days, including a record 63 consecutive days of outage during the recent conflict, according to available data. Internet access across the country 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 April 8 ceasefire took effect, authorities have gradually expand-

ed limited access to selected individuals and entities, but most of the country's population of more than 90 million remains offline."

Abbas Ashtiani, head of the blockchain commission at Iran's ICT Guild Organization, estimated that the digital blackout imposes at least \$30 million to \$35 million in daily direct, indirect and opportunity costs on the country. A KhabarOnline report concluded that Iran's economy lost approximately \$1.71 billion (300,000 billion tomans) during two months of Internet shutdown.

Olfat-Nasab, addressing estimates of daily losses ranging from \$30 million to \$80 million due to Internet outages, said that while no official or definitive figures exist on the matter, available assessments point to substantial losses in the sector. He emphasized that more important than the figures themselves is the true nature of the damages, which are often indirect and hidden and rarely captured in official reports.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Tehran E-commerce Association called for the restoration of Internet access, warning that the cutoff has disrupted updates to security equipment and effective responses to cyberattacks. The association added that the market for virtual private network (VPN) services has surged, intensifying insecurity in cyberspace.

Iran and Russia are gaming United States and winning



By Ian Proud

Former economic counsellor at the British Embassy in Moscow

OPINION

Both Russia and Iran illustrate that wars with oil-rich countries cause oil prices to surge. By using actual warfare alongside economic warfare, the Trump Administration has increased Iran's economic advantages at America's expense.

With Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner no-showing in Islamabad for peace talks, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi continued his shuttle diplomacy to Oman and Moscow on Monday. It is without question that Iran and Russia are two countries who have in many ways shocked the world community with their resilience in the face of sanctions and embargoes. They have plenty to talk about as the US remains more committed than ever to shutting their "shadow fleets down".

Both have as a source of their strength considerable natural resources from which they can generate cash flow to sustain themselves during stand-offs with the West. Russia and Iran have, over many years, run consistent current account surpluses by virtue of selling their natural resources and importing fewer goods in return.

As I have pointed out countless times, Russia saw bumper export earnings in the first year of the Ukraine war, with a record current account surplus. Likewise, Iran is now "making a mint" from the current war. Indeed, the energy squeeze unleashed by the war has been so harsh that US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent was forced early on to issue a sanctions general license to allow the sale of Iranian oil already loaded on vessels, to help

ease global supply concerns. That was before Iran announced the tollbooth system it wants to put in place to charge tankers for Hormuz transit.

Despite all of that, both Russia and Iran have already secured a significant financial advantage. Iran describes its approach as a "resistance economy," which has leaned heavily on oil revenue in the face of stiff challenges, such as rampant inflation, and has built up gold and currency reserves to manage short-term shocks. Clearly, the more recent US move to counter-blockade the Strait of Hormuz, including seizing Iranian vessels, is an attempt to choke the revenue spigot. It will have an effect, but it is not clear how much Iran has in reserves, and for how long it can hold out during a dramatic revenue drop.



From left to right: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin

● RESPONSIBLE STATECRAFT

Likewise, Russia's "fortress economy" model has endured 12 years of sanctions, leaning on surpluses from oil sales, which are used to meet fiscal needs without a significant requirement to grow debt, which still stands at less than 20% of GDP. And as I pointed out recently, clamping down on oil shipping delivers mixed results, at best.

Iran has now been subject to economic sanctions for 47 years, and yet has been able to record economic growth in the years since COVID. That's not to say the country is in great shape. Its economic



Inevitably, the calculus in Tehran, as it has been in Moscow, will be that they have a higher pain threshold on the back of decades of hardship, and that they can inflict greater pain on their Western opponents. Speaking from personal experience, one of the reasons Europeans sanctions against Russia were never as tough as they could have been was a reluctance among EU member states to accept the domestic economic pain of a more hardline approach.



People walk under the flags of Iran in the Grand Bazaar of Tehran on April 27, 2026, during the cease-fire in the US-Israeli war against their country. ● ZEINAB BABAMORADI/DEFA PRESS

headaches are far more acute than those faced by Russia, without a doubt. Iranians are getting poorer, and the financial system is in zombie territory, in a more extreme version of the dysfunction that now characterizes Ukraine's financial system.

But as mentioned before, there are reserves and more importantly, rather than the war producing the hoped-for coup d'état and regime change, many Iranians have rallied around the flag on the back of an upsurge in nationalist sentiment.

As with Russia, the Western mainstream media continually reports on the likely implosion of Iran's economy as sanctions and global isolation intensify as a way to legitimize the war's continuance. But, if Iran wasn't going to buckle economically in the years before the war when its oil exports and earnings were sagging, it isn't going to do so now, with the oil market booming in its favor.

Inevitably, the calculus in Tehran, as it has been in Moscow, will be that they have a higher pain threshold on the back of decades of hardship, and that they can inflict greater pain on their Western opponents.

In any economic warfare, the attacker has to be prepared to accept economic pain to secure ultimate victory. Speaking from personal experience, one of the reasons Europeans sanctions against Russia were never as tough as they could have been was a reluctance among EU member states to accept the domestic economic pain of a more hardline approach.

Americans have now seen prices surge since the war started, with gas prices rising by 30% in the space of a month and other household necessities costing more. Some are questioning the impact of the Iran war for Republicans in the mid-term elections in November. Neither Iran nor Russia face the same democratic crunch point.

Moreover, Iran does not face the same debt servicing pressure as America since its official national external debt stands at a mere 27% of GDP, having been cut off of the western financial system for so long. Instead, it can keep printing money, borrowing from domestic banks and living with the inflationary consequences at a time of war. Iran's economy has been cauterised from exposure to the global economy, meaning that any new sanctions will have limited effect.

None of this is wizardry. Any country hit by sanctions seeks every possible means to circumvent them, including smuggling, trans-shipment, the use of intermediaries, and alternative currencies. New methods of evading sanctions crop up all the time in Iran, not the least the receipt of payments in crypto-currencies.

Herein we see the danger of comparing like for like. Manifestly, America has nominally, the largest economy in the world; the Pentagon alone spends at least three times more each year than Iran's total yearly economic output. So, slamming Iran with US missiles and sanctions, not to mention assassinating its leaders should, in theory at least, bring the country to its knees and precipitate revolution. And yet it still hasn't.

The article first appeared on Responsible Statecraft.

War against Iran has weakened US in great power competition



By Bülent Gökay

Professor of International Relations at Keele University

OPINION

Two months after US President Donald Trump initiated the US-Israeli war against Iran on February 28, the costs

of the war are mounting, particularly due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Before the war started, the Strait of Hormuz handled about 20% of worldwide oil transportation and a large share of natural gas shipments. The disruptions to these energy supplies are leading to increased fuel prices, higher electricity costs, rising transportation expenses across the

world and even endanger semiconductor production — due to disruptions in the supply of helium following damage to key facilities in Qatar.

The Middle East is also a significant producer of fertilisers. In 2024, up to 30% of global fertiliser trade passed through the Strait of Hormuz from the Persian Gulf to export markets worldwide. Disruptions to this supply have

severely affected African nations (among others), which rely heavily on imported fertiliser.

The war's economic impact has been particularly severe in the Asia-Pacific region, which depends heavily on Middle Eastern oil imports. Over 80% of crude oil and LNG passing through the Strait of Hormuz goes to countries in this region, such as China, South Ko-

rea and Japan. In 2025, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh primarily obtained LNG from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, while Pakistan, Japan and the Philippines each relied on over 90% of their crude oil imports from the Persian Gulf.

Fuel prices in key Indian cities have surged, with petrol and diesel costs rising by approximately 10-15% over just a few weeks. In Indonesia, nickel producers have reduced output by at least 10% due to shortages of natural gas and sulphur, which are essential for reaching the high temperatures required to extract and refine the metal. Additionally, garment factories in Bangladesh are experiencing severe



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production disruptions due to shortages of polyester and nylon, which are fossil-fuel byproducts used in clothing manufacturing. Another important impact arises from the disruption of remittances sent home by the millions of workers from South Asia and Africa who work in the Persian Gulf region. Many observers put the blame for this war on Trump's personality. Trump's current foreign policy does not mark a full break from previous policies. The foundation was established by earlier Democratic and Republican governments. The global landscape has significantly evolved over the past 30 years. As a result of the rising economic success of emerging powers and the slowdown of the core economies of Western Europe, the previous world order under US/Western Europe's hegemony has visibly weakened. This ongoing fundamental power shift towards the global East and the decline of the Anglo-American core since the late 1960s lie at the root of the increasingly aggressive policies of US leadership. By all indications, the age of dominance by any single hegemonic power, first experienced by European colonial powers and then by the US, seems to be coming to an end. The impact of new powers is so significant that the centre of gravity of the global economy has already shifted away. Despite the slowing down experienced by China, India and other emerging economies, the emerging world of the global East is still growing substantially, outpacing much of the rest of the world, not racing ahead fast, but with a more balanced growth. The 2026 US-Israeli war on Iran, just like the wars of the War on Terror early in the century, is not helping to solve the problems of US power. All these wars are accelerating the end of the

American century by draining US resources and creating a power vacuum, allowing China to expand its influence through pragmatic diplomacy, secure energy supplies, and observation of US military tactics. While the US faces economic strain, China gains influence by presenting itself as a non-interventionist partner, leveraging the conflict to advance its global economic interests and reshape the geopolitical order. Several observers agree that the joint US-Israel military intervention in Iran has been characterised as the most detrimental foreign policy endeavour in the history of the United States and as the imperial overreach that marks the end of the American Century and the beginning of a prolonged decline in US hegemony. Political developments since 2001 have clearly illustrated that the superior military forces of the United States and its allies have been unable to retain control over the oil resources of Iraq, Libya and other Middle Eastern countries. Far from preventing the decline of US economic and financial hegemony, ongoing military aggression and arrogance may instead compel its regional and European allies to distance themselves from its strategic objectives. This development prompts an essential inquiry for the oil-abundant nations of the Persian Gulf: if the United States cannot adequately safeguard them from attacks, and if having US military bases indeed increases their susceptibility, should they reconsider the wisdom of their dependence on the United States in the Middle East? Persian Gulf states are increasingly questioning their reliance on Washington. China entered this region around the early 2000s with strategic patience and diplomatic ambition. As of

early 2026, Saudi Arabia exports more oil to China than to any other nation. The UAE has incorporated Huawei technology into its critical infrastructure. Chinese firms are building ports, railways, 5G networks, and smart cities across the Persian Gulf. In March 2023, Beijing supported the Saudi-Iranian normalisation deal, highlighting China's rise as a key mediator in the Middle East. That year, Saudi investment minister Khalid al-Falih stated that a multipolar world had formed and emphasised the important role of Persian Gulf-Chinese cooperation. As the US is seen as an increasingly unreliable protector, the Persian Gulf states might pursue increased security and economic ties with other powers. By obstructing the Strait to hostile nations and selling its oil in alternative currencies, Iran is actively challenging the United States' financial supremacy — the global dominance of the US dollar, which has historically dictated that most of the world's oil is priced and transacted in US dollars. Iran is now contesting the dollar's exclusive role by informing countries that, to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, they must cease supporting US-Israeli military aggression against Iran and agree to sell oil not in US dollars but in China's currency, the yuan. The petrodollar system has been a geopolitical tool that has allowed the US to maintain a strong grip on the world economy and financial markets by ensuring the dollar remains the world's primary reserve currency. The system creates a constant external demand for US dollars and Treasury bonds, which allows the US to run large trade deficits while keeping domestic interest rates low. The dominance of the dollar is not just a financial matter, but also something deeply rooted in the geo-



The illustration shows US President Donald Trump next to a snippet of his recent Truth Social post where he showed frustration with the failure of his previous plans to open the Strait of Hormuz, closed by Iran. **THE SUNDAY TIMES**

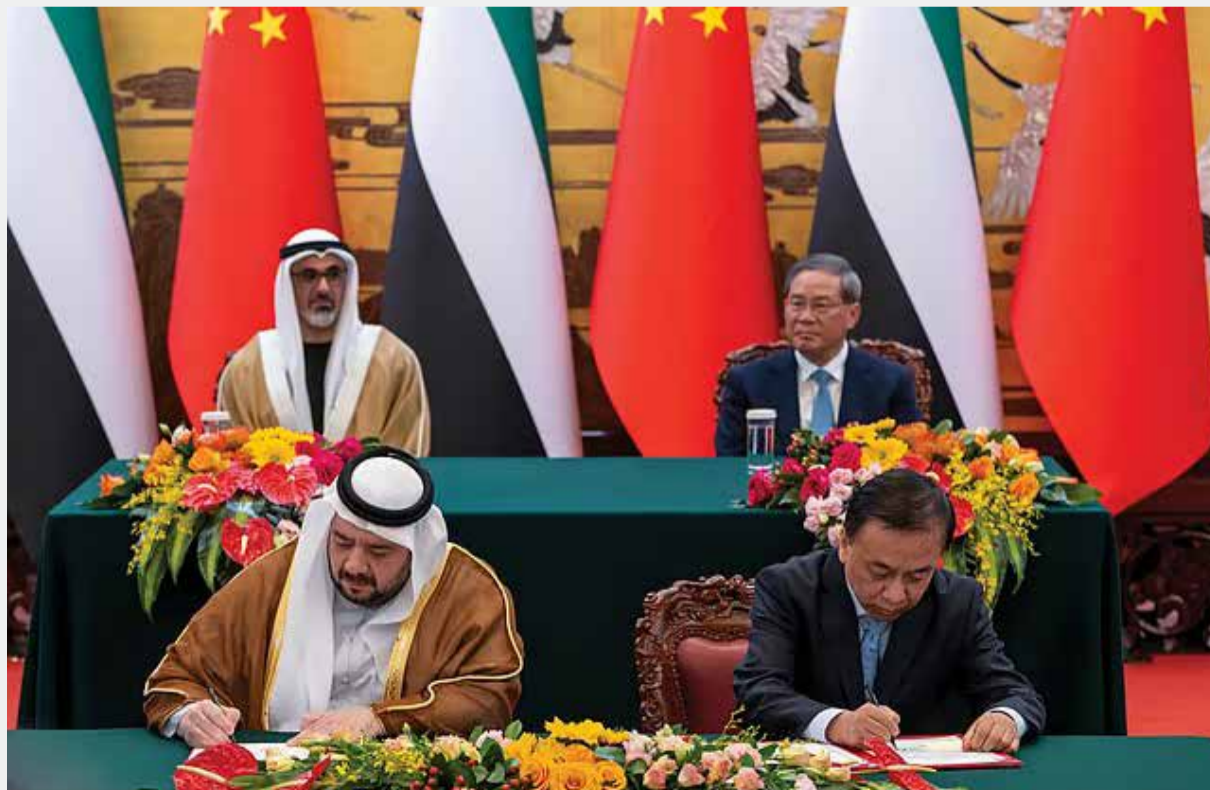


As a result of the rising economic success of emerging powers and the slowdown of the core economies of Western Europe, the previous world order under US/Western Europe's hegemony has visibly weakened. This ongoing fundamental power shift towards the global East and the decline of the Anglo-American core since the late 1960s lie at the root of the increasingly aggressive policies of US leadership.

political role of the United States. It appears that Iran fully understands the implications of this challenge for US hegemony, the significance of the dollar system and the petrodollar, which explains Iran's direct targeting of this system. The current war has exposed significant weaknesses in US power, often described as a "strategic paradox" in which overwhelming US-Israeli military superiority has failed to produce stable political outcomes or meet key strategic objectives. Despite achieving tactical successes in striking Iranian infrastructure and military leadership, the coalition has not forced Iran into submission. Instead, it has pushed the conflict into a long, uncertain war of attrition. Experts argue that even a US military victory could be Pyrrhic, leading to a fractured alliance network and a global economy gradually aligning more with Beijing's leadership. For over 70 years, the United States has maintained its position as the cornerstone of the global order, not solely through military strength but also via the institutions, regulations and economic frameworks that have shaped the post-Second World War international system. To navigate this strategic environment, the United States established a security and energy framework that has become integral to its worldwide influence. The February 2026 strike on Iran has raised significant questions regarding both the credibility and sustainability of the United States' leadership. China has used the US-Israel war on Iran to present itself as the more responsible of the world's two superpowers, and as one that often prefers to stay in the background rather than be out front and centre. Beijing has positioned itself as a voice of reason thanks to its longstanding policy of "non-interference" in other countries' internal affairs, a cornerstone of its foreign policy since 1955, and its working relationships with all players in the war on Iran. The war in Iran is viewed in Beijing as validation that the US-centred liberal international order is eroding, reinforcing China's conviction that a multipolar world is emerging, in which its influence can expand. Whether the current cease-fire signals a permanent end to the conflict remains uncertain, but the result of this ill-advised war is clear: the US, as a global superpower, is now weaker than before. While the strikes inflicted heavy damage on the Iranian military, command and infrastructure, the conflict has failed to achieve its core objectives of swift regime change or total ballistic disarmament. Instead of strengthening the United States, Trump's military move has given the world an impression of an unstable, untrustworthy and aggressive military power, aiding China's efforts to present itself as a responsible global leader.



Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (back-L) and Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Li Qiang (back-R) witness the signing of several memoranda of understanding to further strengthen the UAE-China partnership, in Beijing, China, on April 13, 2026. **CNS**



The article first appeared on E-International Relations.

Sports Desk

Legendary Iranian wrestler Abdollah Movahed has passed away at the age of 86 in Virginia, the United States, his wife announced. He suffered a heart attack while driving on Thursday. Widely regarded as Iran's greatest freestyle wrestler of all time, Movahed was a central figure in the country's wrestling glory years during the 1960s and was part of the squad when Iran claimed the team title at the 1965 World Championships in Manchester.

A winner of six world and Olympic gold medals throughout his career, Movahed was the most decorated Iranian in the history of the sport for decades – until Greco-Roman great Hamid Sourian surpassed that feat with a seventh major gold at the 2014 World Championships.

Movahed's first appearance at the World Championships came in Sofia in 1963, where he finished sixth after losing to Türkiye's Mahmut Atalay. At the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, he placed fifth without suffering a single defeat.

His dominance in the lightweight class began at the 1965 World Championships, where he clinched gold in

Legendary Movahed, Iranian wrestling icon, dies at 86



the 70kg category, finishing ahead of Atalay and Soviet wrestler Zarbeg Beriashvili. He remained the dominant force in the weight class for five years – undefeated in all international competitions – securing four more world golds, one Olympic

gold medal, as well as the top prize at the Asian Games in 1966 and 1970.

At the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, he won four bouts by fall and three by decision. In 1971, he finished fourth at the World Championships in Sofia,

and at the 1972 Munich Olympics – which marked his final appearance on the global stage – he was forced to withdraw due to injury. Iranian Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali led the tributes, praising Movahed as “an enduring symbol of

the genius and prestige of dear Iran,” whose illustrious career was “filled with medals, honor, and pride for this land.”

“He was the very embodiment of a patriotic champion – a legend whose authentic Iranian identity

remained steadfast and brilliant even during the years he lived away from home, with his heart always beating for the glory of Iran,” Donyamali said.

“His world and Olympic gold medals may have been surpassed in number by

other sons of this land, but his elevated status as one of the pioneers of greatness and expertise will forever be etched in the history books of Iranian sport.”

Movahed is one of six Iranian wrestlers – alongside Gholamreza Takhti, Emam-Ali Habibi, Ebrahim Javadi, Mansour Mahdizadeh, and Rasoul Khadem – to have been inducted into the United World Wrestling Hall of Fame, receiving the honor in 2004.

The National Olympic Committee of Iran offered its condolences on the passing of Movahed, who “dedicated his illustrious life to elevating the name of Iran on the international sporting stage.”

Best remembered for his patriotism and devotion to his homeland, Movahed turned down an offer to coach the U.S. national wrestling team after immigrating to the United States, saying he never wanted to compete against his own country.

“To be honest, I really wanted to go and work in Iran, not in America. I didn't want to teach what I knew to someone who would then go and defeat Iranians. That's just the way I was,” Movahed said in a recent interview.

● MAHMOUD AREFI/jamran.ir

Infantino tells FIFA Congress Iran will play at World Cup as planned

Sports Desk

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has repeated his belief that Iran will take part in the World Cup this summer despite the Iranian federation failing to attend the international governing body's annual congress in Vancouver. Iran's delegation was the only absentee from the 211-member congress as Thursday's meeting got under way after a clash with Canadian border officials earlier this week.

Officials from the Iranian Football Federation (FFIRI) abruptly left Canada after landing in Toronto, abandoning their onward trip to Vancouver. FIFA sources described the matter as a “regrettable situation” but insisted that Iran had been invited to attend congress and that responsibility for deciding who enters the country lay with the Canadian authorities.

Iranian media said FFIRI President Mahdi Taj – a former member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) – and two colleagues flew home after being “insulted” by Canadian immigration officers.

The three-man delegation “was granted visas by the host country of the congress and faced no issues entering Canadian soil,” the official website of the FFIRI said in a statement on Thursday.

“However, the host's misconduct toward the federation's delegation, along with vile and offensive insults directed at the country's proud armed forces led the president of the Football Federation to decisively refrain from answering the divisive and suspicious questions posed by the Canadian officers.

“Emphasizing his commitment to the pillars and principles of the sacred system of the Islamic Republic, taking pride in the nation's powerful defense forces,



and relying on national unity, he chose to withdraw from attending a country that had broken its promises just 42 days before the World Cup,” added the statement. Iran's World Cup participation has been the subject of uncertainty since the US and Israel launched airstrikes on the country in February, but Infantino insisted they will fulfil fixtures against New Zealand, Belgium and Egypt.

“Let me start at the outset by confirming straight away, for those who maybe want to say something else or write something else, that of course Iran will be participating at the FIFA World Cup 2026,” Infantino said at the congress. “And of course, Iran will play in the United States of America. The reason for that is simple, because we have to unite. We have to bring people together. “There are enough problems around the world. There are enough people who try to divide all over the world. If nobody tries to unite, what will happen to our world? We have to do it, and we have this opportunity.” Iran will begin their World Cup against New Zealand in Los Angeles on 15 June, where they are also due to play Belgium on 21 June, before finishing Group G against Egypt in Seattle.

▲ FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks during the 76th FIFA Congress in Vancouver, Canada, on April 30, 2026.

● JENNIFER GAUTHIER/REUTERS

US President Donald Trump, meanwhile, has told reporters that “I'm OK” with Iran playing in the upcoming showpiece, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada from June 11.

“If Gianni said it, I'm OK,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. “You know what? Let them play.” Despite Infantino's confidence there remain concerns that Iran could experience immigration problems this summer. The US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, said last week that Iran's players will be welcome, but indicated that some members of their federation, who “have ties to the IRGC” may experience difficulties. The Canadian government had issued Taj with a temporary resident permit (TRP) allowing him to enter Canada to attend congress, but it appears to have been revoked. “My understanding is that there is a revocation of the permission,” Canada's foreign affairs minister, Anita Anand, said.

▲ The Guardian and Al Jazeera contributed to this report.

Asian Beach Games:

Iran coach Qashqaeirad hails ‘courage, dedication’ after handball glory



● IRIHF

Sports Desk

Iran beach handball head coach Mahdi Qashqaeirad was full of praise for his players' “courage and dedication” after a shootout victory over three-time champion Qatar in the men's final at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China. Stepping into Wednesday's showdown on the back of six wins in as many games, Iran dominated the first period, winning 18-10, before Qatar bounced back with a 15-10 victory in the second to force the contest into a decisive shootout. The Iranians converted all their attempts, while goalkeeper Ali Heidarian saved Qatar's third effort, as Qashqaeirad's men secured the country's ninth gold medal at

the multi-sport event.

“The match was of exceptional intensity – it truly felt like playing in an Olympic or Asian Games final,” Qashqaeirad said after the game.

“Qatar entered the Games with extensive support and immense pressure, but I sincerely thank my players for their courage and dedication. They did a great job of managing the game and proceeded in a composed manner,” the Iranian coach added. “Fortunately, we had planned for this situation in advance and practiced it thoroughly,” Qashqaeirad said.

A haul of nine golds and one silver saw Iran – represented by 57 athletes across 10 sports – finish third in the medal table of the sixth edition of the Games. Host China

topped the standings with 24 golds, with Thailand finishing runner-up with 10.

The penultimate day of action saw Iran also taste glory with four gold medals in beach wrestling, as well as the top prize in beach soccer and water polo.

Hassan Ajami got Iran off the mark by winning gold in the men's shot put on Sunday, followed by the kabaddi team stunning India 44-31 in the men's final on Monday.

The country's only silver medal came in the men's beach volleyball event after the pair of Abolhassan Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenei suffered a straight-set loss (21-15, 21-12) to the high-profile Qatari duo of Cherif Samba and Ahmed Janako in the final.

Ancient Achaemenid seal reveals early Persian naval power

Iranica Desk

A notable seal impression preserved at the National Museum of Iran has been identified as dating to the Achaemenid period, approximately 492-460 BCE. Despite its modest size, the artifact provides striking evidence of the technological skill and maritime capabilities of Persian seafarers more than 2,500 years ago. The seal was discovered in 1936 during excavations conducted by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago under the direction of Erich Schmidt, from the Treasury of Persepolis. The imagery engraved on the seal depicts a large vessel shown in left profile, moving from right to left. The ship's hull is distinctly curved, and at the prow a prominent ram is clearly visible, according to ISNA. These rams—typically crafted from durable metals such as bronze—were essential components of ancient naval warfare. They were designed to strike and puncture the hulls of enemy ships, rendering them inoperable. Their function closely parallels that of battering rams used in land warfare to breach gates and forti-

fied walls. The clear depiction of such a feature leaves little doubt that the vessel represented on the seal is a military ship, likely a war galley. Further details of the ship reinforce this interpretation. It is equipped with 22 oars, indicating a sizable and coordinated rowing crew, as well as a single mast with a sail that appears to be furled. This combination suggests a vessel capable of both oar-powered maneuverability and wind-assisted travel, reflecting an advanced understanding of naval design and function. To the right of the ship, the image of a palm tree is rendered with notable care. Based on its shape and the depiction of hanging clusters, it likely refers to the coastal and hinterland regions associated with the Persian Gulf. Beyond its geographical implication, the palm tree also held symbolic meaning in Achaemenid culture, often associated with royal authority, prosperity, and legitimacy. Its inclusion in the scene may therefore carry both geographic and ideological significance. Taken as a whole, the composition can



be interpreted as a visual expression of Achaemenid maritime dominance. This interpretation is supported by additional historical evidence. For example, coins

featuring images of warships were minted in the city of Sidon — one of the major commercial hubs along the eastern Mediterranean coast — under the authority

of Persian rulers such as Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III. These coins point to a sustained Persian political and military presence in key maritime regions. Another piece of evidence is the inscription of Darius the Great in Egypt. By constructing a canal between the Nile River and the Red Sea (known as the Canal of Darius or the ancient Suez), Darius enabled maritime communication between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf; a rare undertaking that reflects his strategic understanding of the importance of the seas. In his inscription, he explicitly states that ships under his command passed through this waterway and reached the Persian Gulf. Although the seal measures only about 2.5 centimeters in diameter, its historical significance is substantial. As a clay seal impression now housed in the National Museum of Iran, it stands as a valuable testament to the organization and sophistication of the Achaemenid naval fleet. More broadly, it reflects the central role that maritime power and sea routes played in the political strategy and imperial vision of the Achaemenid state.

Iranica Desk

Although Khorasan Razavi Province is widely recognized as Iran's leading tourism hub due to hosting millions of pilgrims and tourists and enjoying a prominent religious and historical status, a significant portion of its pristine treasures remains hidden within the serenity of nature and the authenticity of rural life. This ancient land, with its rich cultural heritage, is now home to a growing number of designated tourism villages. Despite their remarkable potential, these villages have remained largely overlooked, overshadowed by the province's religious tourism appeal. Each of these scenic settlements carries a unique identity rooted in history, vernacular architecture, natural landscapes, and traditional customs. Beyond being travel destinations, they represent platforms for profound economic and social transformation.

Recognizing and investing in these capacities could not only serve as a driving force for sustainable regional development but also provide a strategic solution to uncontrolled migration, encourage a return to rural areas, and create sustainable employment in local communities. A tourism and rural development expert believes that rural tourism should not be viewed merely as a marginal recreational option, but as a strategic necessity for preserving identity, improving rural livelihoods, and presenting an authentic and multifaceted image of Khorasan Razavi to both domestic and international tourists. Hasan Qorbani, in an interview with ISNA, referring to the growing trend of rural and sustainable tourism, said urban residents and modern travelers are increasingly seeking destinations that offer authentic and meaningful experiences.

"Today's modern tourist is not only looking to visit historical monuments or enjoy nature," he said. "They want to engage with the culture of host communities, their way of life, local foods, handicrafts, and even their everyday challenges." He added

Rural tourism emerges as growth driver in Khorasan Razavi



Kang village, Torqabeh and Shandiz
● wikipedia.org



Zoshk village, Torqabeh and Shandiz
● respina24.ir



Hesar village, Torbat-e Heydariyeh
● uspace.ir



Bujan village, Neyshabur
● wikipedia.org

that the villages of Khorasan Razavi, with their rich background in agriculture, livestock farming, nomadic life, handicraft production, and unique oral and performing traditions, provide a highly suitable platform for this type of tourism. Discussing the dimensions of rural tourism potential in the province, he pointed to the diversity of natural landscapes. "Khorasan Razavi has extraordinary geographical variety, from mountainous and summer regions in the north and west to fertile plains and desert areas in the south. This diversity creates opportunities for various activities such as ecotourism, mountaineering, walking along traditional routes, birdwatching, and even amateur astronomy," he said. Referring to the unique nature of areas such as Kalat and Dargaz, the deserts of Bajestan and Bardaskan, as well as the cultural regions of Taybad and Khaf and

the historical sites of Sabzevar and other cities, he noted that many of these villages are deeply rooted in history. Their traditional architecture reflects past lifestyles and adaptation to local climate conditions. Villages with valuable historic fabric or remnants of castles, old water mills, and ancient qanats can become attractive destinations for history and architecture enthusiasts. Qorbani also identified living culture and traditions as another major attraction. "The Maqami music of Khorasan, special ritual and religious ceremonies in certain regions, harvest festivals, nomadic and pastoral traditions, and indigenous handicraft skills are inseparable parts of rural identity that can become unique experiences for tourists," he said. He further described local agricultural products as an opportunity for developing agritourism. "The quality of agricultural prod-

ucts in many parts of the province, such as saffron, barberry, cold-climate fruits, and medicinal plants, provides tourists with the opportunity to become familiar with production processes and purchase fresh organic products," he explained. Qorbani also pointed to key challenges in rural tourism development, including weak infrastructure such as a shortage of standard eco-lodges, quality traditional restaurants, and adequate communication networks. Poor accessibility to some villages and lack of sufficient public transportation also limit tourist arrivals. He added that weak branding and fragmented marketing is another major issue, leaving many villages and attractions unknown even to residents of the province. The absence of a targeted marketing strategy and engaging content production has resulted in the loss of this potential.

He stressed the need to develop a comprehensive atlas of rural tourism capacities in cooperation with relevant organizations. He also emphasized the development of locally based eco-lodges, empowerment and training programs for villagers, creation of specialized tourism routes, and stronger inter-organizational coordination. Explaining the idea of tourism routes, he said that instead of viewing each village separately, thematic routes could be designed — such as a rural taste route introducing local foods and products, or an oral history route focused on storytelling and historical architecture. He concluded that Khorasan Razavi has the potential to become one of the country's leading rural tourism hubs, but this requires comprehensive planning, long-term vision, smart investment, and most importantly, belief in the hidden capacities of these villages. Torbat-e Heydariyeh, with its 11 tourism-capable villages, stands out as a prominent example of rural potential for sustainable development. This region, blending tradition and the future, has taken significant steps toward achieving rural tourism goals. The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Torbat-e Heydariyeh emphasized the village-oriented tourism approach as the key to sustainable development in the

region. He explained that the city has 11 tourism villages, reflecting the vast natural, historical, and cultural potential of rural areas. Ali Mohammadi identified one of the most important achievements of tourism development in these villages as reverse migration. In some villages, residents who had previously migrated to cities due to lack of job opportunities are now returning. He stated that this trend is the direct result of developing eco-tourism accommodations, restoring historical buildings, and establishing handicraft workshops in these areas. These efforts have not only attracted domestic and international tourists but also brought significant economic growth to the villages. Mohammadi noted that today's tourists are no longer seeking repetitive and crowded destinations but are looking for authentic, local, and human-centered experiences. "Villages naturally offer such experiences, and we have tried to identify, revive, and introduce these capacities to the tourism sector," he said. He added that the potential of Torbat-e Heydariyeh's villages goes far beyond natural attractions. "Each village has its own rituals and traditions throughout the year. In addition, the region's climatic and cultural diversity has led to the creation of unique local cuisines, whose taste and aroma form part of the area's identity," he said. Natural landscapes, mountains, valleys, rivers, and diverse vegetation around the villages provide a peaceful environment for tourists seeking escape from urban noise and pollution. As a result, accommodation in rural eco-lodges has recently become a priority in tourism programs in the region. He further highlighted the revival of the only active historical water mill in Qaleh Now village as a notable example of heritage restoration and tourism development. Mohammadi expressed satisfaction with the strong tourist reception of this water mill, emphasizing that the project has successfully contributed to the economic revitalization of the village.

International Workers' Day

President: Iran's progress depends on laborers' dignity, job security

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Friday that Iran's national development hinges on improving workers' living conditions, job security and dignity, placing labor welfare at the center of state policy in a message marking International Workers' Day, according to an official presidential statement. Pezeshkian framed the labor force as a decisive driver of economic stability and social cohesion, stressing that progress would not be possible without ensuring "dignity, peace and hope" for workers, president.ir reported. He said the administration considers protecting workers' rights and livelihoods a core responsibility,

alongside efforts to boost productivity and workplace equity. "Being a worker is not merely a job," he said, describing it as a form of "dignified living" tied to responsibility and nation-building. The president pointed to workers' role in sustaining production under pressure, from the years following the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War to more recent economic challenges. He said the labor force has consistently underpinned the country's resilience and capacity to navigate external shocks. Pezeshkian, recalling his own early experience with manual labor, said that background informed his understanding of workers' daily re-

alities and reinforced the need for policies that secure stable incomes and safe working conditions. He added that workers remain at the forefront of efforts to strengthen self-sufficiency and maintain industrial output, describing them as a key support base for the government's reconstruction and development agenda. The President also paid tribute to members of the labor community who lost their lives over the years, and extended congratulations to workers nationwide. International Workers' Day, observed on May 1, is marked in Iran with official messages and policy emphasis on labor rights, social protection and economic participation.



Motorcycle rally sets off to denounce attacks on Iran's cultural heritage

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Touring and Automobile Club launched a two-day motorcycle rally on April 30 from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts in Tehran toward Lorestan Province, organizers said, to condemn recent attacks on the country's historical sites and rally support for their protection. Branded the "Falak-ol-Aflak" tour, the event brought together 40 motorcycles organized by the club's National Motorcycle Tourism division. Riders set off from the capital, heading southwest through Qom and Markazi provinces en route to the ancient Falak-ol-Aflak fortress in Khorramabad, a site that sustained damage during



the recent 40-day conflict, IRNA reported. Participants are due to gather at the fortress on May 1, the rally's second day, to amplify the slogan "Cultural heritage is the red line of history and human identity," framing the convoy as both a symbolic protest and a mobile campaign for preservation. Organizers described the initiative as part of a broader series of cultural responses to what they called "aggression" tar-

getting Iran's historical assets, which they said form an integral part of the shared heritage of humanity. "This is about safeguarding memory," one organizer said, calling protection of cultural patrimony a "global duty." According to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, around 149 historical sites across the country were damaged or destroyed during the recent hostilities, with estimated losses reaching roughly 7.5 trillion tomans. The rally follows a similar event held in Tehran on April 24, when dozens of classic cars toured the capital under the same slogan, turning city streets into a rolling display of cultural advocacy and underscoring calls for heightened international awareness of heritage preservation.

'Silent Scream' poster unveiled to commemorate Minab school victims

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian illustrator Mohammadreza Doostmohammadi unveiled his latest poster 'Silent Scream' on state television, commemorating victims of the Shajarah Tayebah school tragedy in Minab, which occurred on February 28 during US-Israeli strikes. The work centers on what Doostmohammadi described as one of the "most bitter" incidents of the early days of the imposed war against Iran, when three missiles struck the school, killing 168 students, staff and a driver. "The scale defies" ordinary description, he said, adding the piece seeks to keep the memory alive and translate public grief into a visual narrative, ISNA reported. Doostmohammadi said the



poster channels a "silent cry," portraying suffocation and suppressed anguish. The composition features a symbolic human figure wrapped in fabric, unable to break free, as bulldozers carve into the face, evoking both

grave-digging and emotional trauma. A widely circulated documentary image of burial sites anchors the lower section, reinforcing the historical reference. He cited the absence of closure in some cases, including a child whose remains were never found, calling it a "profound tragedy." The artist said such works help prevent the event from fading "under the dust of history" and underscore the responsibility of media and cultural figures to preserve collective memory. Two brief lines in the poster address international human rights bodies, questioning what the artist characterized as "inaction." He said the title 'Silent Scream' captures a grief that remains lodged in the throat, unspoken yet enduring.

Blast damages western Iran's Darreh-Shahr museum as artifacts remain protected

Arts & Culture Desk

The Darreh-Shahr Archaeological Museum in Iran's western Ilam Province sustained an estimated 100 billion rials (\$5,650) in structural damage during the recent US-Israeli strikes on Iran, provincial heritage officials said on Thursday, while confirming that all historical artifacts were moved to secure locations before the escalation and remained unharmed. Raaed Naserifar, deputy head of Cultural Heritage in Ilam, told ISNA that the museum was affected by blast shockwaves, resulting in damage to windows, display cases, and

parts of the false ceiling. "We implemented pre-emptive measures," he said, adding that the collections were "fully transferred" before the onset of hostilities. "Not a single historical object was exposed to direct risk," Naserifar said, underscoring that protective protocols were activated in advance in coordination with national security and heritage authorities. Across the country, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has reported that 149 historical sites in 20 provinces sustained varying degrees of damage during the conflict period,

with total losses estimated at around \$48 million, highlighting the nationwide impact on cultural infrastructure. Despite the structural setback, officials stressed that the museum's core integrity remains intact. Restoration assessments have been completed and emergency funding procedures are underway to accelerate repairs. Naserifar said the damage is "mostly superficial," noting that priority is now being given to rapid restoration so the museum can resume full operations and continue its role as a key repository of regional archaeological heritage.

Iran nears malaria elimination as cross-border controls bolster regional health

Social Desk

Iran has edged to the brink of eliminating local malaria transmission despite climatic and border challenges, a senior health official said on Friday, marking the country's expanding role in safeguarding regional public health. Ghobad Moradi, head of the Center for Communicable Diseases Control, told a World Malaria Day ceremony that sustained interventions have driven domestic transmission to minimal levels, even as imported cases persist along eastern frontiers. "Maintaining" these gains, he said, is harder than achieving them. Malaria once ranked among Iran's leading causes of illness and death, particularly from the 1930s through subsequent decades, prompting the creation of a national eradication body. Today, Moradi said, a significant share of infections is "imported," accounting for roughly 20-25% of total cases



in recent years, largely linked to cross-border movement. He stressed that Iran's high vaccination coverage and disease-control infrastructure not only protect its population but also act as a buffer against wider spread of communicable diseases. With neighbors still grappling with infections such as polio, Iran's containment efforts help curb regional spillover and reinforce global health security. Recent epidemiological trends point to a narrowing window for elimination. After three consecutive years with no local transmission, case numbers briefly surged above 10,000 amid regional shifts and climate variability. The trajectory

has since reversed, with local transmission falling to about 500 cases last year. Moradi described the moment as a "unique opportunity" to stamp out remaining transmission through intensified surveillance and targeted interventions in affected areas including Rask, Saravan, Dashtiari, Mehrestan, Sarbaz, Chabahar, Suran, Iran-shahr, Zahedan, Bandar Abbas, and Bushehr. "Iran can and must act now," he said, echoing this year's World Malaria Day theme, and adding that the country's experience in navigating major health challenges positions it to achieve full elimination. In a separate message marking the national day against diseases, Moradi commended frontline health workers for "outstanding" efforts, citing advances in vaccination coverage and the control or elimination of key illnesses such as measles, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and hepatitis as achievements with international resonance.