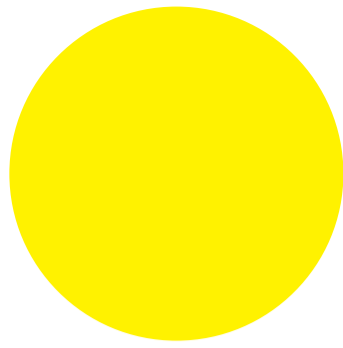


TankerTrackers pushes back on US claims of Iran oil storage crunch

3 >



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Araghchi in China for high-stakes talks amid Persian Gulf tensions

2 >

'We haven't even started': Iran warns of escalation as US buckles in Hormuz

2 >



Vessels are anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas in southern Iran on May 4, 2026. ISNA

US to blame for global chaos, committing acts of piracy: Pezeshkian

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday took a swipe at the United States, pinning the blame on Washington for a chaotic world created as a result of its foreign policy.



"If politics is reduced to power, the result is today's world: chaos, oppression, injustice, and piracy," Pezeshkian wrote on social media platform X, with no direct mention of the US. However, he was apparently referring to a controversial comment by US President Donald Trump who said on Friday that the American Navy was acting "like pirates" to enforce a naval blockade on Iranian ports. "We're like pirates," Trump said at a rally in Florida as he described an operation seizing a tanker carrying Iranian oil. "We're sort of like pirates. But we're not playing games," he added. "We ... land on top of it and we took over the ship. We took over the cargo, took over the oil. It's a very profitable business," Trump said. The Trump administration announced the blockade last month after talks in Pakistan failed to achieve a breakthrough to end a war the US and Israel waged against the Islamic Republic in late February. Pezeshkian praised Iranian politics in which ethics overrule power. "In our national ethos and religious worldview, power without ethics is hollow," he said. "Today Iran represents ethical, responsible power; its enemies embody reckless & unchecked force," the president added.

China's blocking of US sanctions signals new economic-legal cold war



By Hamed Vafaei
China affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

China's recent decision to ban compliance with US sanctions against five Chinese companies linked to Iranian oil—marking the first use of its "blocking statute"—stands as a significant and symbolic legal-political step. The Chinese Ministry of Commerce explicitly stated that no individual or entity should recognize, implement, or comply with US sanctions targeting firms such as Hengli Petrochemical (Dalian) Refinery and four Shandong-based "teapot" refineries. From a legal and economic standpoint, this move is, first and foremost, an effort to safeguard Beijing's economic sovereignty against unilateral US pressure. By

issuing this extraterritorial ruling and rejecting American sanctions, China has effectively drawn on the same model previously employed by the European Union in response to US secondary sanctions on Iran following Donald Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) in 2018. The measure aims to shield Chinese companies from US penalties or secondary pressure, while also sending a clear signal that Beijing is unwilling to sacrifice its vital interests—particularly in energy security—under pressure from Washington. Economically, the move is equally significant given that China purchases more than 80% to 90% of Iran's exported oil, particularly through smaller, more flexible "teapot" refineries. Under current conditions—especially with the Strait of Hormuz effectively closed and global oil flows disrupted—these purchases have become even more critical for China. Ira-

nian oil, offered at favorable prices, effectively helps Beijing contain its energy costs while preserving profit margins for domestic refineries. As such, this step can be seen as a key effort to protect China's energy supply chain. From a geopolitical perspective, particularly in light of a likely upcoming meeting between heads of the US and China, Donald Trump and Xi Jinping, Beijing's stance appears to be a calculated move carrying a direct message for Washington. Through this action, China is signaling to the US—its principal strategic rival—that it will not back down on issues tied to its national interests, especially energy security and supply chains. In such areas, Beijing is unlikely to be pressured into retreat. At the same time, amid the complex dynamics unfolding in West Asia, including the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, it should be noted that disruptions trig-

gered by US-Iran tensions have delivered a major shock to global energy markets, driving up oil prices. China, as the world's largest oil importer, has not been immune to these pressures. However, it also has an opportunity to navigate its dependence on alternative energy routes, including supplies from Russia or the Persian Gulf, in a more calibrated manner. In this context, China's legal backing for continued purchases of Iranian oil sends a signal across West Asia that Beijing still recognizes Iran as a key energy supplier—even in times of crisis—and is committed to maintaining that relationship. At the same time, the move helps Tehran preserve its limited foreign currency revenues and sustain its resistance to unlawful Western sanctions. A key point for policymakers in the Islamic Republic lies in distinguishing between an "ideological ally" and a "calculative

strategic partner." Based on current realities in the international system, China appears to be seeking a careful balance—providing operational support to Iran without incurring direct military or security costs. On another level, this move also reinforces China's narrative of "multilateralism-based international law" while undermining the legitimacy of unilateral US sanctions. From this perspective, Beijing's action should be seen as part of a broader effort to build a parallel financial architecture and sustain policies such as de-dollarization and the promotion of the petro-yuan. Given the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and China's track record in "transactional diplomacy," Tehran would be well advised to present its proposals for Beijing's role in West Asia and the Persian Gulf before the anticipated Trump-Xi meeting.

Page 3 >



'We haven't even started': Iran warns of escalation as US buckles in Hormuz

International Desk

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf warned that the ongoing situation in the Strait of Hormuz is becoming "unbearable" for the United States, while Tehran has "not even started yet."

In a post on X on Tuesday, Qalibaf asserted that a "new equation" is being established in the strategic waterway. "The security of shipping and energy transit has been endangered by the United States and its allies through the violation of the ceasefire and the imposition of a blockade," Qalibaf wrote. "Of course, their evil will be diminished." "We know very well that the continuation of the current situation is unbearable for the United States, while we haven't even started yet," he added.

Iran's military on Monday warned that it will target any foreign forces approaching or entering the Strait of Hormuz after the US said it would help guide ships through the strategic waterway.

On Sunday, US President Donald Trump claimed that the new US maritime operation, which he dubbed "Project Freedom", was a humanitarian gesture for crews aboard the many ships stuck in the Persian Gulf who may be running low on supplies. He said the US would help ships from countries not involved in the conflict.

Shortly after Iran's warning, Fars News Agency reported that a US frigate in the strait "was targeted by a missile attack after ignoring a warning from the Iranian navy," adding that it was hit and forced to turn back.

However, CENTCOM denied the report, saying that no US frigate was struck by the Iranian forces.

The Iranian Navy also fired warning shots at several US destroyers in the Sea of Oman, which tried to enter the strait.

FM: 'Project Freedom' turning to 'Project Deadlock'

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also took to the X, saying that recent



The photo shows two men sitting in a skiff and fishing near a vessel anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas in southern Iran on May 5, 2026.

● ISNA

developments in the Strait of Hormuz have once again made it crystal clear that there is no military solution to the political crisis in the West Asian region, reaffirming the Islamic Republic's policy of pursuing diplomacy from a position of strength.

In a post on X on Monday night, Araghchi highlighted steady progress in indirect talks between Iran and the United States, crediting Pakistan's sincere and constructive mediation efforts.

"As talks are making progress thanks to Pakistan's gracious efforts, the U.S. should be wary of being dragged back into a quagmire by ill-wishers. So should the UAE," the top Iranian diplomat said.

Araghchi also sharply dismissed Washington's much-publicized "Project



Freedom" — a naval initiative aimed at exerting military pressure in the Strait of Hormuz — calling it "Project Deadlock."

Iran shut down the chokepoint to enemies and their allies following the launch on February 28 of the United States' and the Israeli regime's latest bout of unprovoked aggression target-

ing the Islamic Republic. The Islamic Republic began exercising far stricter controls last month after Trump announced a blockade of Iranian vessels and ports in continuation of the aggression and in violation of the terms of a ceasefire agreement reached between the two countries following peace negotiations in Pakistan.

Araghchi in China for high-stakes talks amid Persian Gulf tensions

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was scheduled to arrive in Beijing on Tuesday for talks with Chinese officials on the latest developments in the West Asia region as well as the peace negotiations between Iran and the US, in which "some progress" have been made.

"During the visit, he will meet his Chinese counterpart (Wang Yi) to discuss bilateral ties and regional and international developments," Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The visit to China comes after a three-leg diplomatic tour that took the Iranian foreign minister to Russia, Pakistan and Oman last week.

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

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 ne-



Abbas Araghchi
● IRNA

gotiations. But 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.

Tehran has submitted a 14-point proposal to Washington aimed at permanently resolving the issue of war.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday Iran has received Washington's response to Tehran's proposal regarding negotiations, saying that reviewing the US re-

sponse is not easy due to its pattern of "excessive demands and unreasonable requests."

The diplomatic efforts come as attacks on ships and the UAE's refineries in recent days have reignited tensions in the Persian Gulf which has been calm for weeks after the ceasefire between Iran and the US.

The Iranian foreign minister said on Monday that developments in the Strait of Hormuz show that there was no military solution to the crisis. He said peace talks were progressing with Pakistan's mediation while warning the US and the UAE against being drawn into a "quagmire by ill-wishers." Meanwhile, Pakistan's prime minister condemned missile and drone attack on civilian infrastructure in the UAE, and said it was "absolutely essential" for the cease-fire between the US and Iran to be upheld.

Shehbaz Sharif, whose country played a significant role in recent negotiations between the US and Iran, said in a post on X that maintenance of the truce would allow the diplomatic space for dialogue and lead to enduring peace and stability in the region.

Tehran blasts Arab League move for distorting 'root causes' of regional crisis

International Desk

Iran condemned on Tuesday a recent resolution adopted by the Arab League, saying that the resolution willfully disregards the "undeniable root causes" of the current situation in the region.

In a letter addressed to the United Nations Security Council, Iran's Permanent Representative, Amir Saeid Iravani, dismissed Resolution 9245, transmitted by Bahrain as chair of the 165th session of the Council of the Arab League.

"Any attempt to misrepresent realities or to shield the perpetrators of aggression from accountability will neither alter the legal facts nor absolve those responsible of their international obligations and consequences," he further said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran categorically and unequivocally rejects this resolution in its entirety, together with the unfounded, misleading, and politically motivated allegations contained therein," Iravani wrote.

The letter slammed the resolution for willfully disregarding the "undeniable root causes" of the current situation in the region.

Iravani asserted that the document omits a central fact, namely that the United States and Israel have perpetrated acts of aggression against Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity in violation of international law and the UN Charter.

The US-Israeli aggression against Iran began on February 28 with airstrikes that assassinated senior Iranian officials and commanders, including Leader of the Islamic Republic



Amir Saeid Iravani
● IRNA

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. The Iranian Armed Forces responded by launching daily missile and drone operations targeting locations in the Israeli-occupied territories as well as US military bases and assets across the region.

According to Iravani, the Arab League resolution seeks to "distort both the factual record and the applicable legal framework" by falsely attributing responsibility to Iran, which is a victim of an unlawful war of aggression.

The ambassador further reiterated the country's legal position regarding its right to self-defense under international law, including measures taken in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

Iravani also recalled Iran's prior communications to the secretary-general and the Security Council concerning the internationally wrongful acts and complicity of several Arab states, including Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan, for their role in "aiding and abetting the aggressor."

Military source: Five killed in US attack on civilian boats

International Desk

An Iranian military source rejected the US claim of targeting Iran's speedboats in the Persian Gulf, saying that the attack targeted two civilian cargo boats heading from the Omani coast to the Iranian shoreline.

Citing a military source on Tuesday, Tasnim News Agency said that the US military attack on boats claimed the lives of at least five people.

"Instead of targeting IRGC speedboats, the United States, in a blatant crime, opened fire on two small boats carrying civilians' goods."

Detailing the developments on the ground following issuance of the false account by Washington, the source said, "Given that none of the IRGC's combat vessels had been hit, local sources were consulted to verify the nature of the incident."

"The investigation revealed that US forces had [actually] attacked and fired on two small cargo boats transporting goods belonging to civilians. The boats were traveling from [the town of] Khasab, along the coast of Oman, towards Iranian shores. The attack resulted in the deaths of five civilian passengers." The source asserted that the Amer-

icans had to certainly be held accountable for the crime.

It attributed perpetration of the crime to the enemy's acting in a "hasty and clumsy" manner due to the "inexplicable fear and nightmare" it has been experiencing since the Islamic Republic issued credible warnings against hostile and trespassing vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Tensions have been rife in the Persian Gulf and around the strategic chokehold since February 28, when the United States and the Israeli regime began their latest bout of unprovoked aggression against Iran.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



TankerTrackers pushes back on US claims of Iran oil storage crunch

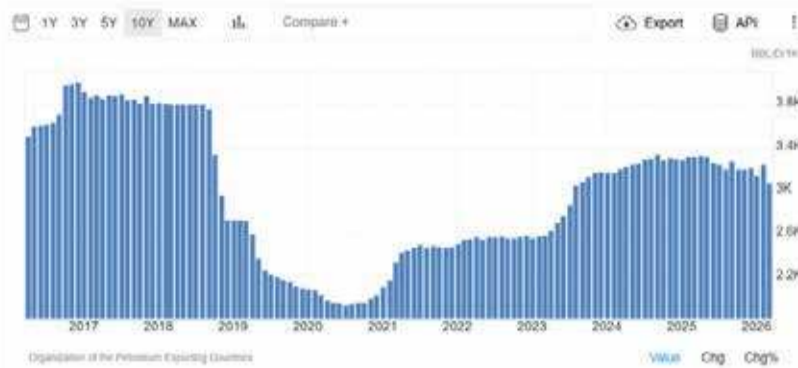
Economy Desk

Maritime intelligence firm TankerTrackers challenged US claims that Iran's oil production is close to shut-down due to storage constraints, saying output could be sustained even if exports fall sharply.

In a series of posts on X, the firm said, "The ongoing narrative that Iran's oil storage will fill up ASAP and cause production to shutter is wrong," adding that Iran has the capacity to maintain production by redirecting crude for domestic use.

A US naval blockade of Iranian ports since mid-April has sharply reduced exports, leading to a rapid buildup of crude both onshore and offshore. Data from analytics firm Kpler showed Iranian crude loadings dropping from around 2.1 million barrels per day (bpd) before the blockade to about 567,000 bpd in recent weeks.

"If we look back to the Trump 1.0 era, Iran scaled back production to just under 2 Mbpd. Fact is that they can refine that entire amount of oil just for domestic consumption," TankerTrackers said. Data tracked since 2018 indicates Iranian exports have already declined from



recent highs and are likely to continue falling. However, the firm said that even if exports were to drop to zero, production could still be maintained at roughly 1.8 to 2 million bpd.

Referring to a separate chart tracking exports since April 2018, it added, "The prior tweet's chart showed Iran's oil production whereas this one shows Iran's oil exports as we've tracked them since April 2018. As you can see, exports are already down off their highs. Production will decrease. Assuming exports hit zero, production can still hold at 1.8-2 Mbpd."

The report said output may not decline

as quickly as expected even without exports, provided Iran can deploy reserve tankers and move them past US-imposed restrictions.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has recently warned that Iran may be forced to shut down oil wells within a week as storage nears capacity under intensified sanctions and maritime restrictions.

The pressure is part of "Operation Economic Fury," targeting Iran's oil exports, financial networks and shipping routes to strain its economy. US President Donald Trump has extended the blockade of Iran's ports following a 40-day conflict,



aiming to push Tehran toward a peace agreement after a 40-day war.

Iran said it would continue monitoring traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. Under new conditions set by Tehran, only commercial vessels with prior authorization are allowed to transit, while

ships linked to the United States, Israel and other "hostile states" are barred.

Iranian officials, including Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, said measures are in place to counter the pressure and that the country would not be forced into halting production.

Iran's saffron boom: 'Red Gold' harvest forecast to double to 600 tons

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Iran's saffron production is forecast to more than double this year to around 600 tons, supported by improved weather conditions and expanded cultivation, the deputy head of Iran Saffron National Council said.

Gholamreza Miri told Iran Daily that output is expected to rebound sharply from about 220 tons last year, when production fell by 50% to 70% due to drought and water shortages that forced farmers in many rural areas to irrigate fields using tanker trucks.

Global saffron prices rose by about 20%, driven in part by reduced supply from Iran, the world's leading producer, as well as regional tensions and air transport disruptions, he said.

Domestically, saffron prices have also increased alongside a weakening currency, although exporters have not yet fully passed on higher costs to overseas buyers, Miri said, adding that a further 20% rise in global prices is likely due to ongoing supply constraints.

Iran's national currency has fallen to record lows amid mounting economic pressure. The rial weakened beyond 1.80 million per US dollar on the open mar-

ket on Tuesday, compared with around 811,000 a year ago.

Miri, referring to statistical fluctuations in the country's saffron production, said that no precise production figures were announced last year by the Ministry of Agriculture, noting that such statistics are often influenced by various political and external factors. However, reports indicate that Iran's saffron production stood at approximately 420 to 450 tons two years ago, while last year saw a decline of 50% to 70%, bringing total output down to around 220 tons.

The official expressed optimism about the current crop, stressing that favorable rainfall has improved field conditions. "At this time last year, saffron fields had already turned yellow, but now in early May they are green and healthy," he said, adding that cultivation areas have expanded and authorities are encouraging higher yields per hectare.

Average yields, which were about 6 kilograms per hectare three to four decades ago, have declined to around 3 kilograms in recent years. Plans are in place to raise productivity back to at least 6-8 kilograms per hectare, he said.

Miri attributed the long-term decline in yields to less specialized farming practices in the past, when many growers treated saffron cultivation as a secondary activity and relied on minimal irrigation, affecting flowering and output.



Saffron prices currently range between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per kilogram on global markets, he said. The highest-grade saffron, known as "Super Negin," is priced at about 265 million rials per kilogram domestically, (equivalent to roughly \$1,470).

Supply disruptions have been exacerbated by regional conflict, which has halted flights used for official exports. Countries in the Persian Gulf have also stopped direct purchases from Iran, similar to policies adopted by Saudi Arabia in recent years, though indirect trade continues via intermediaries.

As a result, many Iranian saffron producers, processors and exporters are operating at only about 10% of capacity, Miri said. Domestic consumption has declined due to inflation and economic pressures, while exporters are increasingly forced to route shipments through intermediary countries such as Turkey, Oman and Afghanistan. "We hope that by easing tensions, exports will return to normal conditions as soon as possible," he concluded.



Gholamreza Miri

China's blocking of ...

Ultimately, while China's move—coming after its veto of a resolution proposed by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia—can be viewed as an example of Tehran-Beijing strategic relations, it should not be overlooked that China's approach to Iran is not rooted in an "alliance-based" framework. Rather, it is largely shaped by Beijing's broader policy of "risk manage-

ment." In pursuing this approach, China has managed to secure cost-effective energy flows from Iran, maintain stability in its energy sector, preserve its leverage in West Asia, and build up a bargaining chip ahead of negotiations with Washington, which remains entangled in the Persian Gulf's complexities.

Overall, Beijing's move can be seen as both a symbol and a component

of a "new economic-legal Cold War" between major power centers in the international system—one in which emerging powers are actively working to erode the dominance of unilateral US sanctions. On this basis, the anticipated Trump-Xi meeting is likely to play out as a stage for power bargaining over these tensions and the emerging order shaped by developments in West Asia.

Petchem sector prioritizes feedstock supply in post-war recovery

Economy Desk

Iran is prioritizing the supply of feedstock to downstream industries and essential consumer goods as it works to restore petrochemical production following recent US-Israeli attacks on key facilities, a senior oil official said on Tuesday.

Hassan Abbaszadeh, CEO of the National Petrochemical Company, said the industry was mobilizing all resources to rapidly rebuild damaged units, return production to stable levels and compensate for shortages of some products.

"Supplying feedstock for downstream industries and essential goods is at the top of the petrochemical sector's priorities," he said after a meeting with downstream industry associations, where the latest status of recovery and reconstruction at petrochemical complexes was reviewed.

"Our goal is to ensure there is no concern about meeting essential needs, as the raw materials used in downstream industries to produce goods required by the public must be supplied in a stable manner," the deputy oil minister added.

Iran suspended exports of all petrochemical products "until further notice" following US-Israeli attacks on its two main petrochemical hubs in the south earlier in April.

Air strikes over several days hit facilities in Mahshahr, in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, and in Asaluyeh, in the southern province of Bushehr, damaging installations at multiple companies. Iran's nominal petrochemical production capacity had reached about 100 million tons per year, with actual output at around 80 million tons. While no official figures have been released on the scale of damage, the petrochemical and steel sectors were among

the main targets of the attacks.

Abbaszadeh said ensuring stable feedstock supply to downstream industries was a key focus of discussions with industry groups, stressing the sector's role in completing the value chain, supporting employment and preventing layoffs in production units.

Separately, Saeed Torkaman, chairman of the board of the National Polymer Industries Association of Iran, said on April 20 that some petrochemical units damaged during the conflict had already resumed operations.

"Several industrial units had gone out of production, but industry engineers shortened the reconstruction period at an unbelievable pace, and fortunately some lines have returned to operation," he said, adding that facilities across the petrochemical value chain — from feedstock to finished products — had been affected.

First smart grid R&D opened in Mashhad to address power shortages

Economy Desk

Iran has inaugurated its first smart grid research and development center in northeastern city of Mashhad aimed at improving electricity supply-demand imbalances, a senior official at state power company Tavanir said on Tuesday.

Hamed Ahmadi, head of the technical, engineering and smartification office at Tavanir, said the facility is designed to enhance energy management and promote more efficient electricity consumption across the country.

"The management of smart consumption is one of the pillars of policymaking in the power

industry regarding imbalances," Ahmadi said, according to ISNA. He said the growing use of smart equipment in daily life has created a new ecosystem in the sector, with smart meters forming a key component. He added that other devices, including smart switches, are expected to be installed in households in the near future to enable more efficient electricity use.

Ahmadi said the new research and development center is equipped with solar power generation units, electric vehicles, energy storage systems and smart home technologies. He added that the facility is connected to all smart components linked to the power grid.



He said one of the center's key capabilities is simulating electricity sector data through data mining and artificial intelligence, allowing grid operators to make optimized decisions.

Ahmadi said the software and simulation tools used in the center have been developed domestically, adding that Iranian manufacturers are working to localize other advanced equipment in the sector.

Iran key player in shaping new regional order in Persian Gulf



By Masoud Dashti Derakhshan
International affairs analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In recent months, events related to the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf region have rapidly evolved. These developments can no longer be regarded solely as economic or political issues. Instead, we are witnessing the onset of a new strategic game focused on control, security, and order in one of the most sensitive waterways in the world, with Iran's role becoming increasingly prominent as a key actor.

A significant sign of this shift is the changing approach of insurance companies toward tankers and commercial ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz. These changes not only highlight ongoing tensions and escalating risks in the region but also reflect a move by various actors toward a fundamentally different, and notably more challenging, future.

A new set of rules in insurance and security frameworks

Recently, global insurance companies — particularly in maritime transport — have implemented new policies that are, in effect, revolutionary. According to Markus Baker, head of Marine and Cargo at Marsh, insurers now are “taking their own view” on what terms to impose as a condition of coverage for ships navigating the sensitive Strait of Hormuz. This policy, which signals mounting ambiguity and risk in the region, requires ships to select routes approved by Iran in order to obtain war risk insurance. This new requirement indicates that all actors are now approaching these issues from a different, more political-economic contractual perspective. In fact, this policy favors Iran because, through this maneuver, it secures greater leverage over transit routes and non-regional actors.

This shift, coupled with the possibility of collecting tolls for the Strait of Hormuz, demonstrates that Iran presently holds a central position in the regional game and plays an explicitly



The Galaxy Globe bulk carrier and the Luojiashan tanker sit anchored in Muscat, Oman, on March 9, 2026, as Iran vowed to close the Strait of Hormuz.
● BENOIT TESSIER/REUTERS



Vehicles drive past a billboard with graphic showing Strait of Hormuz and sewn lips of US President Donald Trump in the Valiasr Square in downtown Tehran, Iran, in May 2026.
● ANADOLU

decisive role in shaping the new regional order. The region can no longer be regarded as indifferent or passive. Once again, Iran signals through these new policies that it seeks a new order — one rooted in national strength and willpower, not merely diplomatic and political measures, but built upon unrivaled naval influence and real regional power projection in the Persian Gulf and the Makoran Sea.

Persisting uncertainty and rising risks in the region

These policy shifts in insurance strategies strongly indicate that the region is on the brink of transitioning from crisis to deeper turmoil. Uncertainty regarding the safety of tankers and trading fleets has markedly increased. The risks of conflict, attacks, insecurity, and sanctions now push both regional and extraregional actors toward more cautious and

restrictive policies. The ultimate outcome appears to be the solidification of a tense and unstable environment. In this setting, each actor seeks to consolidate its interests, evidenced by the new insurance policies that seem also to solidify Iran's role in the new regional order.

In this context, the positions of the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution are unequivocally clear. He has emphasized that



These stances indicate that Iran is currently on a more decisive path. Decisions concerning transit routes, insurance policies, and even the global response to regional crises now rest directly in Iran's hands. Policies that may appear economic on the surface are, in reality, powerful instruments for managing regional security, consolidating national interests, and shaping a new order.

“the management of the Strait of Hormuz will not return to the pre-war era.” This statement signifies Iran's intent not to revert to periods when regional control was held by foreign powers or international bodies. Contrary to previous policies that apparently adhered to diplomacy and negotiations, the struggle for control and security of the Strait of Hormuz has entered a new phase where Iran, leveraging its power and influence, seeks to establish a new order.

These stances indicate that Iran is currently on a more decisive path. Decisions concerning transit routes, insurance policies, and even the global response to regional crises now rest directly in Iran's hands. Policies that may appear economic on the surface are, in reality, powerful instruments for managing regional security, consolidating national interests, and shaping a new order.

The power game is shifting

Ultimately, given the recent developments and novel policies being implemented in the region, particularly concerning insurance and maritime routes, it can be concluded that the game in the Strait of Hormuz has entered a new phase. This phase is distinctly shaped by Iran's ascendancy as the cornerstone of this new order. The regional situation can no longer be viewed through the lens of traditional conflicts; rather, we must anticipate a new paradigm where Iran is no longer merely a local or regional player but assumes the role of leader and rule-setter.

In this scenario, any concession or display of weakness towards Iran will carry a heavy price for regional and extraregional countries. As stated by the Leader, a return to the pre-war status quo is no longer possible as Iran, with its newfound strength and resolve, is now actively consolidating a new order based on dignity, security, and national sovereignty. The Strait of Hormuz is no longer just a waterway; it has become a symbol of a nation's power and determination, poised to play a decisive role in the region's destiny. The new game has begun, and in this game, Iran is the principal observer and actor, dictating the terms.

Geopolitical factors driving oil price volatility

By Masoud Dashti Derakhshan
International affairs analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The recent surge in oil prices can be attributed to a complex interplay of geopolitical and economic factors, as highlighted in recent

news. While some analysts focus on the direct impact of sanctions and supply restrictions, recent global events indicate that the oil market is influenced by a multitude of interconnected drivers.

Supply challenges and sanctions

The report from HFI Research, which suggests Iran has the



A huge plume of smoke rises as a result of Ukrainian drone attacks on the oil refinery in Tuapse, Russia, on April 28, 2026.
● SOCIAL MEDIA

capacity to maintain oil production and storage for an additional two months, when contrasted with the US President's claim of a three-day capability, underscores the complexity and uncertainty surrounding the actual volume of Iranian oil supply. This ambiguity, in itself, can influence prices. Furthermore, the news of 52 vessels, including 31 oil tankers, passing through the US blockade signifies attempts to circumvent sanctions and maintain export flows, indicating pressure on global supply.

Conversely, Kpler's report noting only six vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz — including two that are subject to US sanctions and one that is linked to Iran's "shadow fleet" — suggests that the Strait of Hormuz continues to face restrictions, potentially impacting global oil supply.

Insecurity of maritime routes and transit disruptions

The Panama Canal Authority's reference to unprecedented traffic of oil tankers and commercial ships on that same canal due to insecurity along other maritime routes emphasizes the impact of logistical disruptions on the oil market. Insecurity and increased maritime transit costs directly affect the landed cost of oil and, consequently, its global price.

Escalation of energy crisis and regional tensions

Russia's accusation that Kyiv is exacerbating global oil shortages through attacks on oil storage facilities further validates the role of military conflicts in destabilizing energy markets. The attack on oil storage in Tuapse, intended for export operations, demonstrates the direct impact of military engagements on critical energy infrastructure and global supply.

Diplomatic reactions and economic threats

China's threat to seize US assets in Beijing following sanctions on a Chinese refinery for its ties to Iran signals escalating geopolitical tensions and the potential for trade wars and sanctions to expand into other domains. Such diplomatic reactions and economic threats can undermine investor confidence and the stability of global markets, indirectly influencing oil prices.

In summary, the rise in oil prices is the consequence of a confluence of complex factors: supply constraints stemming from sanctions and geopolitical tensions, logistical disruptions in vital maritime routes, escalating military conflicts targeting energy infrastructure, and diplomatic responses that fuel global market instability. These elements have collectively contributed to the increase in global oil prices.



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TankerTrackers.com, Inc. @TankerTrackers · May 3

A National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC) VLCC supertanker carrying over 1.9 million barrels (valued at nearly \$220 million dollars) of crude oil has managed to evade the U.S. Navy and reach the Far East.

Her name is HUGE (9357183), and we last sighted her off Sri Lanka over a week ago. She is currently traversing the Lombok Strait of Indonesia toward the Riau Archipelago. Until now, HUGE has not transmitted on AIS since 2026-03-20, when she departed the Strait of Malacca for Iran.

#OOTT #IranWar #Tankers



An Iranian supertanker carrying nearly \$220 million worth of oil has evaded US blockade efforts, TankerTrackers wrote on social media platform X (formerly, Twitter).

Future of OPEC, OPEC+ post-UAE withdrawal

By Masoud Dashti Derakhshan
International affairs analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The decision of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to officially withdraw from OPEC and OPEC+ effective May 1, 2026, marks one of the most significant structural shifts in the global energy market in the past decade. The departure of a country producing an average of 3.46 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2025, with ambitions to increase its capacity to 5 million bpd by 2030, transcends a mere technical disagreement over production quotas. It signals a geopolitical move with direct consequences for OPEC's cohesion, oil prices, and the trajectory of the energy transition in the Persian Gulf region.

The UAE has also exited the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC). Previously, Mohammed Sorour Al-Sabban, a former adviser to the Saudi Minister of Energy, emphasized that the UAE's decision to leave OPEC+ under current circumstances, particularly given its limited spare production capacity, raised numerous questions. He noted that this move would not impact the stability of OPEC+ or its role in global markets. Al-Sabban posed a key question: Could the UAE not have waited until its production capacity reached five million bpd? He also suggested that the US might be behind this decision as Trump aims to portray himself as the controller of global oil markets. According to Al-Sabban, the objective of this action is to destabilize OPEC+, but this will not happen.

Within this context, market analysis must simultaneously consider two levels: institutional cohesion and market resilience/compensatory mechanisms. Therefore, the UAE's withdrawal should be viewed not merely as a breakdown of cooperation but as a test for supply management frame-

works and a redefinition of roles.

Political-economic dimensions

An analysis of OPEC decisions from 2016 to 2024 reveals a significant trend: the average compliance rate of Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries with OPEC production cut agreements has fallen from 91% to 63%. This decline is largely attributed to disputes between the UAE and Saudi Arabia over the baseline production levels.

- UAE's share of OPEC production: 9.2%
- Share of OPEC+ spare capacity: Approximately 14%
- Share of Persian Gulf oil exports: 12%

The departure of such a player directly weakens OPEC's ability to manage the market and exert a coordination effect. The simultaneous exit from OAPEC further signifies a multi-layered institutional rift, implying that the repercussions of this decision extend beyond production

and China in setting purchasing patterns. From an analytical standpoint, this scenario carries a structural implication: a diminished institutional coordination that shifts bargaining power towards purchasing and technological investment spheres, leaving OPEC with greater limitations in directing price trends.

Scenario 3: accelerated transition to sustainable energy

Geopolitical pressures and climate change constraints may push Persian Gulf countries towards diversifying their energy portfolios away from fossil fuels. Projections indicate:

- A rise in the UAE's solar energy capacity from the current 6.2 GW to 23 GW by 2030,
- An increase in the share of renewable energy in the overall Persian Gulf energy mix from 7% in 2025 to 22% by 2035,
- And an average annual investment of \$40 billion in green energy across the region.

Considering Al-Sabban's view that the withdrawal will not affect OPEC+'s stability, the energy transition could act as a political adjustment factor. Even if short-term volatility occurs, a long-term shift towards alternative energy investments alters the political and economic costs of maintaining disputes.

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capacity.

- Methane leak rates in certain fields are as high as 3.5% (below the IEA standard of <0.2%).

Potential OPEC Responses:

- Collective investment increase in CCS projects, potentially reaching \$10 billion annually.
- Transformation of certain members into hydrogen hubs (with projected production of 25 million tons by 2035).
- Collaboration on methane emission reduction initiatives, aiming for up to 75% reduction by 2030.

In this context, the linkage between institutional fragmentation and carbon pressure is critical. While political withdrawals may impact production coordination, carbon standards and destination market requirements exert consistent, aligned pressure. Addressing these necessitates project-level and investment-level coordination. Thus, the climate response can serve as both a risk management tool and a means to preserve access to key markets.

OPEC at a crossroads of redefinition

The UAE's withdrawal is not a transient event but a breaking point in the architecture of the oil market. Based on the analyses, the implications are as follows:

- Diminished OPEC cohesion, making supply management more challenging.
- Increased bargaining power for independent producers.
- Heightened pressure on OPEC to adapt to climate standards.
- A necessity to redesign OPEC's structure, focusing on flexibility, technology, and decarbonization.

In this evolving landscape, the future of OPEC and OPEC+ will depend not only on production agreements but also on members' adaptability to a low-carbon economy, clean technologies, and the structural competition within the Persian Gulf. Nations that swiftly transition towards cleaner energy sources and resilient economic structures will emerge as the frontrunners in this era of transformation.



US President Donald Trump (2nd-L) attends the US-UAE Business Council in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on May 16, 2025.

WALEED ZEIN/ANADOLU

Regional reports (including those from Al Jazeera) indicate that this withdrawal is not solely a result of quota disputes but also stems from:

- Intensifying competition between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi in energy policy,
- Divergent approaches towards Iran,
- And a widening gap in the economic and industrial development models of the two nations.

These factors have reached a point where they challenge the historical oil cohesion of the Persian Gulf. Considering the weighted data, the UAE's significance in the OPEC and OPEC+ equation cannot be overlooked:

agreements to impact policy coordination networks.

Potential oil market scenarios post-UAE withdrawal

To analyze the potential impacts, three primary scenarios have been developed, drawing upon models from the International Energy Agency (IEA), OPEC, and 2026 data from BloombergNEF.

- **Scenario 1: increased competition and intra-OPEC fragmentation**

In this scenario, following the UAE's withdrawal, the country increases its production by approximately 300,000 to 500,000 bpd between 2026 and 2027. Po-

fining points of influence. As institutional coordination weakens, the market becomes more receptive to dispersed signals, leading to wider price fluctuations.

- **Scenario 2: formation of new alliances outside OPEC**

Under this scenario, the UAE moves towards cooperation with non-OPEC producers (e.g., Norway, the US, Brazil). Potential consequences include:

- A reduction in OPEC's influence on global prices from approximately 35% to 25%,
- The formation of new blocs based on low-cost extraction technologies (Offshore/Deepwater),
- And increased influence of emerging economies like India

Environmental challenges and climate commitments

In 2025, total CO₂ emissions from OPEC member countries were estimated at approximately 7.8 gigaton. To maintain access to European and Asian markets, these nations must align themselves with new carbon standards, including the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), EU 2030 standards, and Asian ESG requirements.

Key Challenges:

- Carbon intensity of oil extraction in some member states reaches up to 13 kg CO₂ per barrel (global average: 9.7 kg CO₂/bbl).
- Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technologies account for less than 1% of OPEC's global

Qalenoey forced to rethink flank options after double injury blow

Sports Desk

With the FIFA World Cup fast approaching, Iran head coach Amir Qalenoey is grappling with a selection dilemma on the flanks of his starting XI after two of his key wingers suffered major injury setbacks within 24 hours over the weekend.

Lech Poznań's in-form winger Ali Qolizadeh has been ruled out of the showpiece after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee during Saturday's victory over Motor Lublin.

"Qolizadeh will face surgery in the coming days, followed by several months of rehabilitation," the club said in a statement on Monday.

Iranian captain Alireza Jahanbakhsh, meanwhile, faces a race against time to be fit for his fourth World Cup participation following a muscle problem sustained during Belgian top-flight relegation playoff action on Sunday.

Should Iran's Supreme



National Security Council give the go-ahead for the national team to take part in the World Cup – amid Iran's military conflict with the United States and Israel

– Qalenoey's men will open their Group G campaign against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15. With Iranian domestic league players set to be out

of competitive action until the global event, Qalenoey will likely have to build his team around his overseas players. However, the recent setbacks have added

Iranian winger Ali Qolizadeh (11), seen in action against the United Arab Emirates in the Asian qualifiers, has been ruled out of the World Cup finals with a ligament injury. ● MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA

further blows to his preparation program – beyond ongoing issues related to securing friendly matches and visa approvals for players who completed their military service in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Qalenoey remains hopeful that Jahanbakhsh's fate will differ from Qolizadeh's, though the head coach is also preparing for the worst-case scenario by exploring alternatives.

Candidates to fill the right-wing position include Mohammad Mohebi, Mehdi Qayedi, and Mehdi Hashemnejad. Mohebi and Qayedi have previously played together effectively – having shared experience at Esteghlal – with Mohebi drifting to the right and Qayedi operating on the left.

The current mini-camp also features Mohammad-Mehdi Mohebi, Arya Yousefi, and Amir-Hossein Mahmoudi, all of whom are vying for a spot. Notably, Yousefi has been pushed forward by the head coach

from full-back and could emerge as a surprise inclusion. Allahyar Sayyadmanesh, a versatile striker capable of playing on the right, is another option.

Among the hopefuls, 17-year-old Mahmoudi has had a meteoric rise: in less than a month, he earned his top-flight debut for Persepolis, scored a goal, and joined the national team camp. If selected for the trip to the United States, he could become the youngest Iranian player in World Cup history.

Qalenoey's immediate priority is awaiting official confirmation of Jahanbakhsh's condition. Meanwhile, Iran's training camp in Turkey is set to begin next week, where overseas players will join their domestic counterparts. With 40 days until Iran's opening game, the clock is ticking for Qalenoey – who is eager to lead Team Melli to a maiden knockout-stage berth in seven attempts – to resolve one of the most critical challenges of the World Cup buildup.

Ajami aiming for Asian Games glory after Sanya success

Sports Desk

Iranian shot putter Hassan Ajami says he will be looking to build on his gold-winning campaign at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, when chasing glory at September's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games. Ajami opened the account for the Iranian delegation at the multi-sport event – thanks to a sixth and final effort of 20.17m that saw the Iranian beat the host nation's Chen Chengyu and Zhang Haochen to the top prize – as the country, represented by 57 athletes across 10 sports, went on to finish third behind China and Thailand in the medals table with nine golds and a single silver. "The level of competition was very high, and most teams arrived at full strength. The results and records achieved in this

edition were notably better than the previous one, which shows just how competitive the event in Sanya was," Ajami told Mehr News Agency. Regarding his own performance, Ajami said: "I am pretty satisfied with how I did. I managed to achieve my ideal mark and ultimately claim the title. "Iran's delegation traveled to the Games under difficult circumstances, but overall, I believe we achieved decent results," added the Iranian, referring to the wartime situation in the country. Ajami also opened up about his own challenges before heading to the event. "Compared to my rivals, I went through very tough days in terms of preparation. At one point, the country was going through a difficult period, and training was called

off for a while. After that, our preparation started late. In a sport like athletics, any interruption first makes you fall behind yourself, and then you fall further behind your competitors. Fortunately, I was able to produce an acceptable performance, and I am happy with the outcome." He noted an unusual reversal of fortune between two recent competitions. "Before this, at the Asian Indoor Championships in China, I had better training conditions and was in much better form, but I did not get a good result there. At the Beach Games, the situation reversed, as despite being less prepared, I managed to achieve a much better outcome." Ajami had placed fourth at the Asian Indoor event in Tianjin with a best attempt of 19.39m.

Ajami was keen to stress that the Sanya field was not weak. "It is worth noting that the gold medalist at the Asian Indoor Championships came second here. So no one can say the level of these games was low." Looking ahead, Ajami made it clear that the Asian Games later in the summer will be his primary target in the coming months. "The Beach Games served as a warm-up for Nagoya. There is not much time left until that competition. I will give everything I have to be among those selected and to perform well there." He drew a direct comparison to underscore his ambitions. "If I had recorded the same mark at the last Asian Games in Hangzhou that I achieved here, I could have won a gold medal. My goal is to be present in Nagoya and achieve a result



Iran's Hassan Ajami poses with his men's shot put gold at the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, on April 26, 2026. ● PAN YULONG/XINHUA

worthy of myself and my country." Addressing the lineup of Iran's athletics squad in Sanya, Ajami said: "The federation had announced that this was not the main team, and that the trip was largely for gaining experience. That does not, however,

mean that some athletes have lost their chance to go to Nagoya. Several young athletes were sent to gain experience, while others were there to win medals. I will not comment on other athletes, but I believe my own performance was a decent one."



● FIVB

Iranian opposite Saadat joins Indonesian champion on loan

Sports Desk

Iranian opposite spiker Bardia Saadat has sealed a loan move to Indonesian champion Jakarta Bhayangkara Presisi ahead of the upcoming AVC Men's Champions League – starting May 13 in Pontianak, Indonesia.

The 23-year-old Iranian international, who played for Alanya Spor in the Turkish top-flight's newly finished campaign, is one of several world-class players to sign short-term con-

tracts with the Indonesian outfit, which is eager to lift the trophy on home soil, having finished as runner-up and third in the 2023 and 2024 editions, respectively.

Slovenian outside hitter Rok Možič, who plays for Verona Volley in the Italian league; Cuban middle blocker Robertlandy Simón – a CEV Cup champion and MVP with Gas Sales Bluenergy Piacenza – as well as Malian opposite Noumory Keita, who won the AVC Champions League title with

Al Rayyan last year, have also joined the Indonesian champion in recent days.

Saadat will be looking to deliver an impressive performance at the Asian elite clubs' competition to boost his chances in the three-way battle for a place in the national team's starting lineup – which also features Amin Esmaeilnejad and Ali Hajipour – ahead of a congested international season. Iran will get its Volleyball Nations League campaign underway

against Brazil in the first week of action in the preliminary round in Brasília on June 10.

Italian head coach Roberto Piazza's team will also chase a fifth Asian Championship title in eight editions from September 4 in Fukuoka, Japan, where the top team will secure direct qualification for the LA 2028 Olympics.

A fourth consecutive men's gold will be up for grabs when Iran takes part at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September.

Amiriyeh welcomes families for 17th Golghaltan Ceremony

Iranica Desk

As the fragrant season of the Damask rose — known in Iran as the Mohammadi rose — sets in, the city of Amiriyeh in Semnan Province has officially kicked off the 17th edition of the national Golghaltan Ceremony on May 5, with a renewed focus on tradition.

The Golghaltan Ceremony, a long-standing cultural and religious tradition, was officially registered in 2010 as Semnan Province's first intangible heritage and the second nationwide, following the ancient festival of Nowruz.

Each year, coinciding with the blooming of Damask roses, Amiriyeh — dubbed the "Golghaltan Capital of Iran" — welcomes families from across the country who bring their newborns to take part in the ceremony. The ritual involves gently rolling infants, typically under one year old, in rose petals, a practice believed to bless them with purity, vitality, and protection, Speaking to IRNA, Mostafa Fouadian, mayor of Amiriyeh and secretary of the festival, said the ceremony is deeply rooted in local tradition. "Every year, newborns are placed among rose petals so that their bodies and souls are imbued with fragrance, purity, and blessing," he said.



fararu.com

Fouadian added that this year's event emphasizes a return to more traditional practices, with ceremonies being held in local homes rather than centralized venues.

So far, five traditional houses have been prepared to host the ritual, with more expected to join in the coming days.

Registration for participating infants is being conducted on-

line through the official secretariat. Organizers have also issued guidelines to ensure the ceremony is held respectfully and in line with spiritual values.

Amiriyeh currently has around seven hectares of Damask rose cultivation, both in municipal and private gardens. Harvesting began in conjunction with the birth anniversary of Imam Reza

(PBUH), and approximately two tons of roses are expected to be collected for use in rosewater distillation and the Golghaltan Ceremony.

In addition to the main ritual, visitors can experience traditional activities such as rosewater distillation, Karbas (coarse wool) weaving, and baking of local bread at the city's historic castle.



FARS

Local beliefs hold that rolling infants in rose petals helps maintain their health and freshness, protecting them from illnesses, particularly allergies. Elderly women in the region also say the practice promotes healthy skin and contributes to a cheerful and robust disposition in children.

Residents of Amiriyeh say the tradition has been passed down through generations and remains a cherished element of the region's intangible cultural heritage.

Amiriyeh, with a population of over 3,000, is the center of Amirabad District, located 20 kilometers west of Damghan and 90 kilometers east of Semnan.

Ancient mounds of West Azarbaijan reveal millennia of civilization

Iranica Desk

The ancient mounds of Iran's West Azarbaijan Province reflect the rich and turbulent history of this region. Each of these archaeological sites holds countless secrets, and discoveries made during excavations have often astonished archaeologists around the world.

These unique historical remains are like thick, unread books that that remain largely unexplored. By turning their pages through excavation, valuable insights into ancient civilizations can be uncovered, according to IRNA.

In essence, the ancient mounds are an endless treasure of cultural heritage belonging to both the province and Iran. They invite every visitor and traveler to reflect on history and connect with the events that once took place in this land.

Hasanlu Hill

The ancient site of Hasanlu Hill (Tappeh Hasanlu) in Naqadeh is internationally renowned. Iranian and foreign archaeologists estimate that the structures found here date back to around 800 to 1400 BCE.

The most significant discovery at Hasanlu is the Golden Bowl of Hasanlu, which is of great archaeological importance. It weighs 950 grams, is 21cm high, 25cm in diameter, and has a rim circumference of 61cm. It is currently kept at the National Museum of Iran in Tehran.

The bowl itself is estimated to be about 2,800 years old, dating to around 800 BCE. Its engraved motifs depict an epic narrative scene.

Located 12km southwest of Lake Urmia and 9km northeast of Naqadeh, between the villages of Aminlu and Hasanlu, this site

has been under excavation since 1954. Around 7,500 artifacts made of bronze, bone, and pottery have been discovered.

Architectural remains include large columned halls, long terraces, and both small and large rooms, as well as stone structures dating back to the fourth and fifth occupation phases, approximately 3,000 years old. Since 2003, Hasanlu has been designated as a national research base for scientific and technical studies.

Qalaychi Hill

Qalaychi Hill (Tappeh Qalaychi) is located in Qalaychi village, 12km northeast of Bukan. Archaeological excavations began in 1984,

Hajji Firuz Hill

Hajji Firuz Hill (Tappeh Hajji Firuz) is located in the eastern Suldoz Valley, 2km southeast of Hasanlu in Naqadeh. Excavations have revealed 16 occupation layers and 11 construction phases.

Evidence suggests that settlements from the 6th millennium BCE consisted of independent residential units, each with living rooms, food preparation and cooking areas, storage spaces, and large storage jars.

Children were sometimes buried beneath the floors of these houses. Walls were mainly built with packed earth and, in some cases, unformed mud bricks. Surfaces were occasionally coated with a mixture of mud plaster and gyp-

sum. A trace of red paint was found on part of a house wall, and some floors were coated with a reddish clay mixture. Painted pottery from Hajji Firuz is considered a defining cultural element of this period.

Gug Hill

Gug Hill (Gug Tappeh) is located 6km southeast of Urmia in a valley of the same name. The site measures 455 meters north to south, 600 meters east to west, and is 24.5 meters high.

One of the most important discoveries here is a bronze plaque depicting the Babylonian epic hero Gilgamesh, shown grasping two wild bulls within a circular frame. This artifact dates to the

8th century BCE.

Another important find is a cylindrical seal discovered at a depth of eight meters, bearing motifs of Babylonian deities, likely dating back to around 2000 BCE. It is currently housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Archaeological excavations have identified seven stratigraphic layers, from the lowest level dating to the 4th millennium BCE up to the 1st millennium BCE.

The nearby village of Gug Tappeh, due to its proximity to this archaeological site, has the potential to be developed into a historical park and tourist destination.

Kordlar Hill

Kordlar Hill (Tappeh Kordlar) is an-

over time.

The site is oval-shaped, covering approximately 2 hectares. Joint excavations by Iranian and Austrian archaeologists have revealed clay pottery and residential remains dating to the 1st millennium BCE.

Some historians believe the hill may be the earliest known site of urban settlement on the shores of Lake Urmia.

Bash Qaleh

Bash Qaleh is a historical site over 2,700 years old, located east of Urmia. Also known as Bash Qala, the site sits on a fertile plain near the Shahid Kalantari Road, close to Urmia's industrial zone. It has long attracted the attention of travelers due to its mound-like appearance amid green fields.

This fortress dates back to the first millennium BCE and belongs to the Urartian civilization. It was once a military stronghold used for guarding the region, complete with stationed soldiers and defensive structures.

The remaining architectural layout confirms its military function. Before the Islamic Revolution, German and Italian archaeological teams also conducted research at the site.

West Azarbaijan Province has more than 1,800 nationally and internationally registered historical sites. Among them, UNESCO World Heritage sites include Takht-e Soleyman in Takab, the Saint Thaddeus Monastery (Qara Kelisa) in Chaldoran, the Zor Zor Church in Maku, and the Abbasid caravanserai of Khoy.

These sites together highlight the extraordinary cultural and historical depth of the region and its importance in world heritage.



Hasanlu Hill
fa.nody.ir



Qalaychi Hill
kojara.ir



Hajji Firuz Hill
kojara.com

other significant archaeological site located 25km east of Urmia, near village with the same name, about 1km from the road to Urmia Lake.

The remains are situated on a hill west of the village. Excavations have uncovered buried architectural remains.

These remains date from the 1st to 4th millennium BCE. The building materials mainly include mudbrick and packed-earth walls, which have deteriorated

'Alone in Tehran' to open Diaspora Film Festival in South Korea

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Amin Sahraei's 'Alone in Tehran' has been selected as the opening film of the 14th International Diaspora Film Festival in Incheon, South Korea, spotlighting a personal war-time narrative shaped by conflict, resilience, and human fragility. The film, which will be screened on May 22, unfolds as an intimate account of solitude and survival amid destruction, charting one in-

dividual's confrontation with pain and the search for meaning at the edge of collapse. Festival organizers described the work as a "raw, lived experience" that blurs the boundary between artistic expression and personal testimony, Mehr News agency reported. Sahraei, who directed the film under physically and emotionally challenging conditions linked to wartime circumstances, frames the project as both documentation and reflection. "It comes from within," he said, stressing the

film's deeply autobiographical tone and its focus on human endurance when hope becomes scarce. Alone in Tehran has already circulated on the international festival circuit, including screenings at the 34th Louis International Film Festival in the United States and the AMDOCS Documentary Film Festival, known for its focus on socially engaged cinema. Produced in both short and feature-length versions, the film is currently continuing its global festival run, with

plans for a domestic screening following its international trajectory. Although Sahraei secured visas for Greece and South Korea, he was unable to attend in person due to wartime-related constraints. In a gesture of solidarity, organizers of both the Paziouiti Festival in Greece and the Diaspora Film Festival dedicated the screenings to the filmmaker and the conditions under which the film was made, calling it a work that "speaks beyond borders."



Rural homestays become 'nat'l shelters' in post-war tourism



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's community-based eco-lodges acted as "national shelters" during recent hostilities, as authorities managed more than 29 million domestic journeys, absorbed heavy damage to heritage assets, and mapped a return to growth with a renewed international outreach, the country's Deputy for Tourism Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said on Tuesday. The United States and Israel launched coordinated military operations against Iran on February 28. Speaking on state television, Mohseni-Bandpey said the government repurposed the national Travel Services Coordination Headquarters into a crisis command center, convening 137 emergency meetings to steer mobility and public services between March 16 and April 4. "We handled a vast, fluid population under

wartime constraints," he said, noting that 29.7 million trips were recorded, down about 18% year on year, CHTN reported. He said provinces with dense inflows, including Mazandaran, Gilan, East Azarbaijan and Khorasan Razavi, required "real-time monitoring" and broad logistical backing spanning communications, fuel supply and essential goods. With travelers shifting toward low-density destinations, official occupancy rates dipped while rural eco-lodges "stepped up," offering refuge "free of charge" and operating as a form of passive civil defense. More than 23,000 accommodation units, roadside complexes and tourism service providers kept operations running, preserving the travel support chain, he added. The official put damage to cultural heritage and tourism infrastructure at about \$48.6 million,

with 149 state-run historical sites, museums and monuments affected, including Golestan Palace. He said the impact prompted international reactions underscoring the need to safeguard cultural sites during conflicts. In the private sector, 64 facilities across 13 provinces sustained direct or indirect hits. Seventeen workers were killed at a tourism complex in Zanjan. Mohseni-Bandpey said inbound tourism, which had been rebounding, with April 2025 indicators up 48.5% and 116 tour operators from 26 countries visiting Iran in May, slipped after the 12-day conflict, with arrivals easing from 7.4 million to 6.2 million, a 16.8% decline. Looking ahead, he said the ministry aims to restore momentum and reach 15 million foreign visitors by the end of the Seventh Development Plan (2023-2027). Strategy scenarios range from "continued crisis" to "sustainable calm," with a focus on health and pilgrimage tourism, visa facilitation and regional markets in the Caucasus and Central Asia. He also cited support from Spain, host of the UN World Tourism Organization, and the incoming Spanish ambassador's readiness to promote Iran's tourism capacities as signs of "a new chapter" in international cooperation.

Ancient Iranian artifacts stay in China over security concerns

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian cultural authorities have placed hundreds of loaned antiquities in secure storage facilities in China after extending major exhibitions, ILNA reported, as wartime conditions and airspace restrictions delay their return. The artifacts, dispatched under flagship cultural diplomacy initiatives, include 211 objects spanning the Iron Age to the Safavid era showcased in the 'Glory of Ancient Iran' exhibition, followed by 151 additional pieces under "Land of Mehr." Displayed first in Beijing and later touring Shanghai and Urumqi, the collections drew broad international audiences before their schedules were prolonged. With regional hostilities disrupting logistics, Iranian officials traveled overland to China to oversee the transfer of the items from exhibition venues into "secure" museum storage. "We checked and repacked each piece with precision," said Tehran's Deputy Cultural Heritage Director



Morteza Adibzadeh, describing the operation as meticulous and fully supervised. The artifacts were sealed in standard wooden crates and relocated under joint Iranian-Chinese oversight. Adibzadeh emphasized there was "no cause for concern," noting that the items remain protected under binding international protocols and formal agreements with Chinese counterparts. He added

that the works will remain in safeguarded repositories until safe transport conditions are restored. Originally slated for return in May 2026, the timeline has become uncertain as transport risks mount. Officials acknowledged that moving high-value antiquities requires specialized logistics, insurance coverage, and secure transit corridors, conditions currently constrained.

Iranian critic tapped for FIPRESCI jury at Cannes 2026

Arts & Culture Desk



Iranian filmmaker and critic Pouya Aghelizadeh was appointed to the FIPRESCI jury at the Cannes Film Festival 2026, Mehr News Agency reported, citing Iran's House of Cinema. Aghelizadeh, a member of the International Federation of Film Critics, will serve on the independent critics' panel that awards prizes across sections of the festival. The FIPRESCI jury operates separately from Cannes' official juries, underscoring its role as a global critical voice, Mehr News Agency reported.

The 79th edition of the festival is set to run from May 12 to May 23 in Cannes, bringing together leading filmmakers and critics from around the world. The lineup is expected to feature new works by internationally acclaimed directors including Asghar Farhadi and Andrey Zvyagintsev. Aghelizadeh has previously served as a juror at South Korea's DMZ International Documentary Film Festival and contributed as a critic at the Busan International Film Festival. He is currently developing a feature screenplay titled 'The Season of Bubble Flight,' which is slated for production after Cannes.