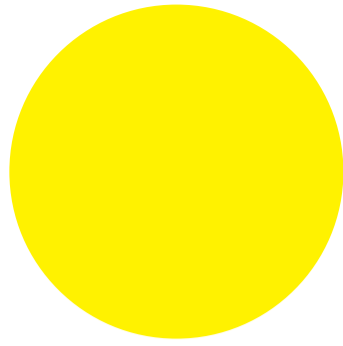


Minister assures stable power supply for looming summer peak



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Iran eyes two-stage negotiation track with US

I N T E R V I E W
E X C L U S I V E

Negotiations between Tehran and Washington are ongoing through an exchange of proposals, with Iran recently submitting its latest package to Pakistani mediators. This comes as disagreements over key issues—including enriched uranium, the Strait of Hormuz, sanctions, and Iran's frozen assets—remain unresolved. US officials keep threatening to resume military operations if no agreement is reached, while Iran has been rolling out new deterrent levers. At the same time, the extension of Pakistan's interior minister's visit to Tehran is seen as a sign of intensified efforts to move the talks forward. In this



Reza Ghobeishavi

context, Iran Daily has conducted an interview with Reza Ghobeishavi, an international affairs expert. He argues that Iran is pursuing a two-stage negotiation process with the United States, whereby general principles would be agreed upon in the first phase, with details to be negotiated at a later stage.

IRAN DAILY: With Pakistan's interior minister extending his visit to Tehran as Iran and the United States continue exchanging proposals, is Islamabad now playing the role of an active mediator, or mainly serving as a conduit for US messages and pressure?

GHOBEISHAVI: The visit of Pakistan's interior minister to Tehran under current circumstances should not be seen as a routine bilateral trip, but rather as part of Pakistan's mediation efforts between Iran and the United States. It should be recalled that Mohsin Naqvi, alongside the Pakistani foreign minister and army chief, is part of the country's mediation team led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Based on the extended stay of Pakistan's interior minister in Tehran and his meetings with Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the head of Iran's negotiating team with the United States, and President Masoud Pezeshkian, the visit can be interpreted as both mediation and the transmission of US messages to Tehran. With [US President] Donald Trump escalating threats of possible military action against Iran, alongside unofficial reports in Western media, Pakistan has stepped up its mediation efforts in an attempt to bring Tehran and Washington to an agreement by any means possible. This aligns both with the interests of regional countries—whose concerns Pakistan is effectively speaking for—and with broader global interests. Failure to reach an agreement would once again place regional and global interests under serious threat, potentially pushing the region into a trajectory of tension and crisis beyond any country's capacity to control. Moreover, in the event of a renewed US attack on Iran, all of Pakistan's achievements through mediation and ceasefire efforts would be effectively wiped out.

Iran has once again transmitted a 14-point proposal to the United States via Pakistan, and it is said that the new text focuses on "ending the war" and "confidence-building measures by the United States." At the same time, some reports indicate that the proposal makes no reference to Hormuz or enriched uranium and only includes a vaguely defined commitment not to produce nuclear weapons. Can this prioritization be seen as a shift in Tehran's negotiating strategy, or merely as managing a stalemate within a repetitive framework?

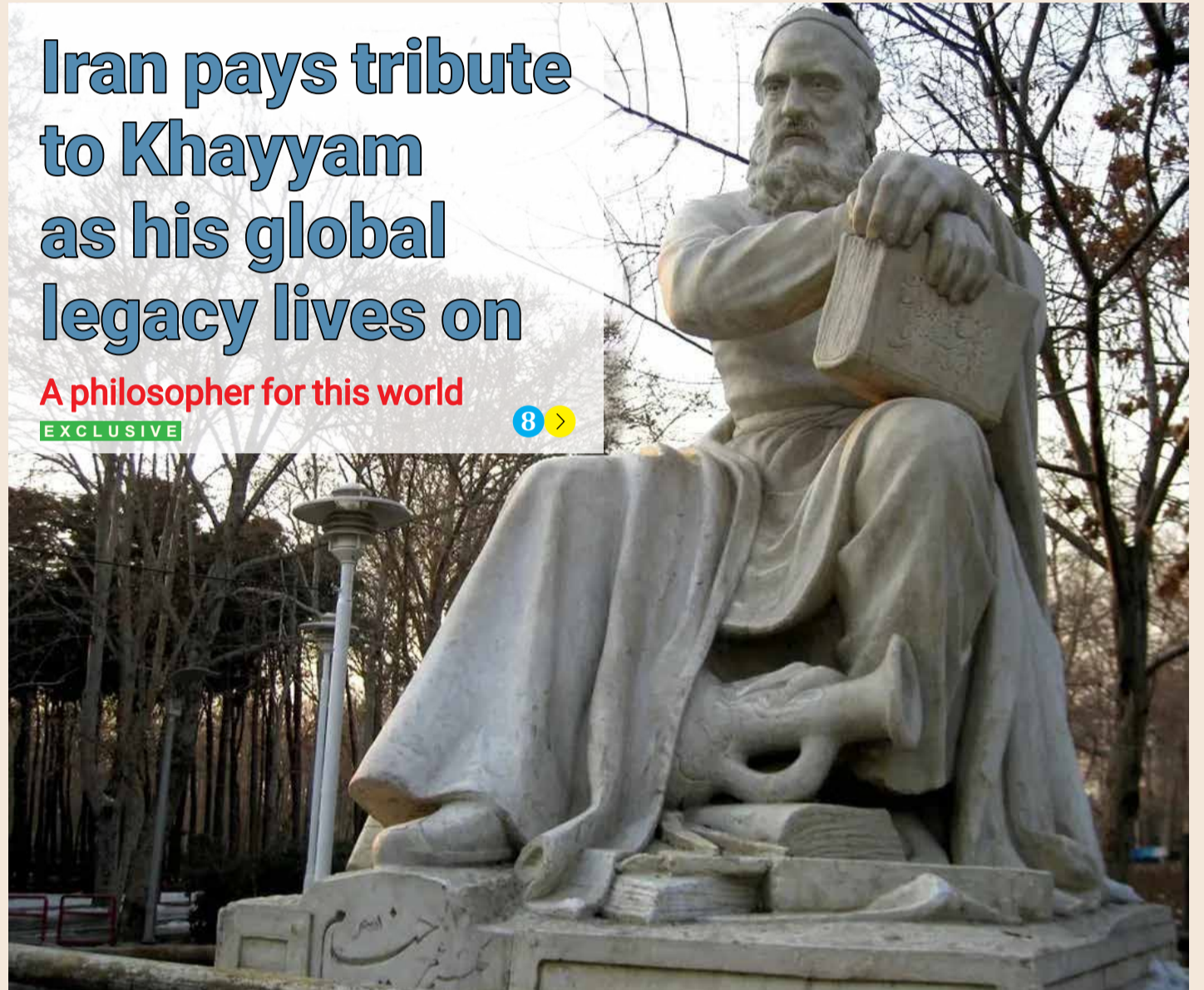
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Iran pays tribute to Khayyam as his global legacy lives on

A philosopher for this world

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We will never bow down to any power: *Pezeshkian*

'Iran to negotiate with dignity'

International Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian vowed he will never yield to any power or sacrifice the nation's dignity for comfort but said the country should be run with prudence.

The president made the remarks during a meeting with the personnel of the public relations of the executive organizations as Tehran and Washington still prefer diplomacy to end the tensions in the region which have been caused by a recent aggression by the US and Israel against Iran.

Pointing to the opponents of negotiations with the US, Pezeshkian said, "We will negotiate with dignity and will never back

down. It is not right to chant that we will not negotiate. We have logic and we are capable of defending the country's rights with strength."

The president noted that the enemy, having failed to bring Iran to its knees in three days, is now attempting to create division between the Iranian people and their officials.

He further noted that the enemies unjustly killed Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and killed Iranian commanders, ministers, and scientists, and martyred the innocent students without any legal or human rights logic.

Pezeshkian added that those who claimed to uphold human rights and international law saw



those crimes but stood by and only watched.

"They do the same to everyone. Look at Gaza and Palestine —



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a meeting with the personnel of the public relations of the country's executive organizations in Tehran on May 18, 2026.

● president.ir

what atrocities they commit," he recalled.

"And the American media justify it, claiming they are defending themselves," he said, noting that they call genocide self-defense. "They have power and force, and they do these things."

On February 28, the United States and Israel initiated an unprovoked war against Iran with the assassination of the Ayatollah Khamenei and several high-ranking military commanders.

The US also killed more than 160 people, mostly students, in an air strike on a school in the southern city of Minab on the first day of the aggression.

In response to the US-Israeli aggression, the Iranian Armed Forces carried out 100 waves of counterattacks over 40 days, targeting US and Israeli military assets, which resulted in significant damage.

After 40 days of conflict, Iran and the US agreed a Pakistani-mediated ceasefire and held one round of negotiations in Pakistan that failed to produce agreement.

However, the two sides have been exchanging proposals to resolve disagreements and end the war in the region.

FM spox: US offered 'revised' terms after rejecting Tehran proposal

Iran, Oman working on new Hormuz transit mechanism

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Monday that the United States has sent a set of "revised" points and considerations to Iran through mediator Pakistan despite publicly rejecting Tehran's 14-point peace proposal.

"After Iran sent its 14-point plan, the US side conveyed its considerations. We also presented our considerations in return. Although the American side publicly announced that this plan was rejected, we received from the Pakistani mediator a set of revised points and considerations from their point of view," Esmail Baqaei said during his weekly press conference.

Baqaei emphasized that Iran will certainly not negotiate or compromise on its rights, saying that the country's right to uranium enrichment has been recognized under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and does not need to be recognized by other parties.

Fars News Agency reported on Sunday that Tehran and Washington have exchanged new proposals for resumption of talks stalled over several key issues.

The news agency said that Washington had presented a five-point list which included a demand for Iran to keep only one nuclear site in operation and transfer its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to the United States.

The US also refused to release "even 25 percent" of Iran's frozen assets abroad or pay any reparations for the



damage inflicted on Iran during the aggression which broke out on February 28 against Iran, according to Fars. The report added that the US had conditioned the cessation of hostilities on all fronts on the start of negotiations. In its proposal, Iran has called for an end of the war on all fronts including Israel's campaign in Lebanon, as well as a halt to the US naval blockade on Iranian ports in place since April 13. It also called for lifting all the sanctions and the release of Iranian assets frozen abroad under longstanding US sanctions.

Fars said the Iranian proposal had emphasized that Tehran would continue to manage the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy conduit which it has largely kept closed since the start of the US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

The developments came as the US President Donald Trump on Sunday once again threatened consequences for Iran if it does not act quickly.

"For Iran, the Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won't be anything left of them. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!," he wrote in a Truth Social post.

Iran-Oman cooperation on Strait of Hormuz

Regarding the Strait of Hormuz, Baqaei said Iran is engaged in continuous consultations with Oman to design a new mechanism governing transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

He said the Strait of Hormuz is a "vital" maritime passage whose importance extends far beyond Iran, Oman, and the regional countries to the entire world.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always made tremendous efforts to safeguard safe and secure transit through this route and continues to insist that passage through the Strait of Hormuz must take place in the best possible manner with complete safety," he added.

He emphasized that both Iran and Oman consider themselves duty-bound to take necessary measures to ensure secure transit through the Strait of Hormuz, as it is located within the territorial waters of the two coastal states.

Baqaei's comments come amid heightened tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime corridor through which a significant share of the world's energy trade passes.

Iran shut down the strait to its enemies and their allies after the unprovoked US-Israeli aggression. Iranian authorities began enforcing much stricter controls last month following US President Donald Trump's announcement of a blockade targeting Iranian vessels and ports.

Iran's new authority for Hormuz launches official X account



Iran has launched a new mechanism for governing maritime traffic through the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

The Iranian authority controlling the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf has launched an official account on the X social media platform amid efforts to facilitate transit via the key international waterway, Press TV reported.

The Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA) said in its first post on the account on Monday that the page will be used to provide "real-time updates on the #Hormuz_Strait operations and latest developments."

"The official X account of the Persian Gulf Strait Authority (#PGSA) is now live," said the post. It came nearly two weeks after Press TV first reported that Iran had launched a new maritime mechanism for vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

The mechanism allows all ships seeking to transit the Strait to receive an email from the PGSA that informs them about the passage rules and regulations.

The PGSA was formed after Iran took full control of the Strait of Hormuz in response to a US-Israeli aggression on the country that began in late February.

Authorities said after the aggression was halted as part of a ceasefire on April 8 that transit via Hormuz will continue to be governed by Iran under new protocols announced by the country's parliament and other relevant authorities.

According to a draft bill introduced in the Iranian parliament last month, restrictions will be imposed on ships owned by or linked to the US and other adversaries, while ships owned by or linked to the Israeli regime will face an outright ban from transit through the Strait.

The bill also stipulates that ships allowed to pass through the Strait need to comply with a toll payment system, with proceeds dedicated to compensating Iran for damage incurred before and after the aggression and to ensuring passage security and environmental protection.

Iran eyes two-stage ...

Based on unofficial reports regarding the exchange of messages between Iran and the United States and their content aimed at reaching a political agreement, two points can be inferred. First, Tehran has not introduced a strategic shift in its negotiations or proposals. Second, Iran continues to present its proposals within a fixed framework, making adjustments to the content each time without altering the overall structure.

Iran is pursuing a two-stage negotiation model with the United States. Within this framework, both sides would, in the first phase, reach agreement on general principles. The focus would be on ending the war, changing the governance of the Strait of Hormuz,

reopening the strait, and ending the US naval blockade of Iran.

These general principles would also define clear boundaries for Iran's nuclear and non-nuclear limitations in exchange for Washington's commitments to lift sanctions and restrictions. In the second phase, Iran and the United States would move on to negotiations over the details.

Amid repeated US threats to return to military escalation if negotiations fail, reports have emerged about Iran's focus on undersea cables in the Strait of Hormuz as a new lever of power. How effective could this tool be in strengthening Iran's deterrence?

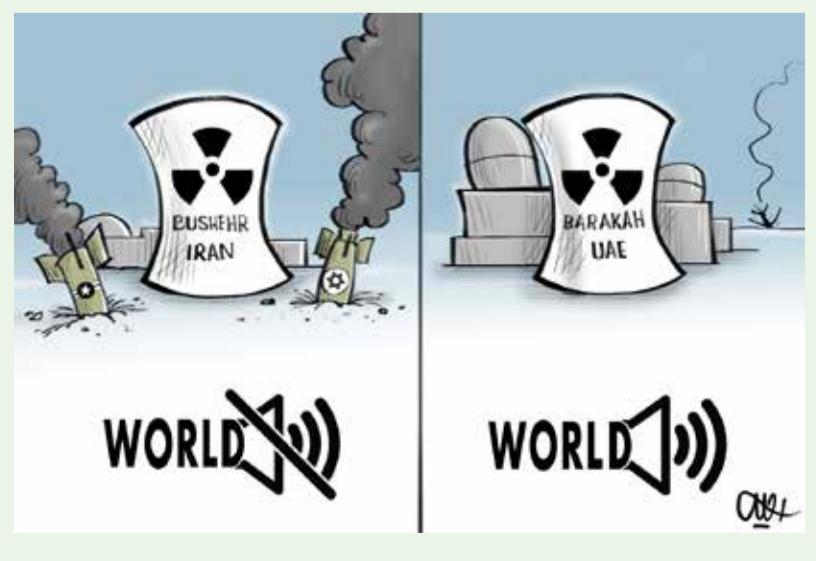
Iran's conduct in the region has already demonstrated that, when it comes to

defending its existence in a wartime environment, the Islamic Republic does not recognize any red lines for itself. Furthermore, many agreements and arrangements that function under normal conditions no longer hold in wartime, prompting a reassessment of frameworks based on new realities. During the 40-day war, one of Iran's strategies was to maximize the cost of war for opposing parties, both directly and indirectly, using every available tool to achieve this objective. The same approach is likely to be carried forward.

Undersea cables in the Strait of Hormuz, much like the strait itself, could become instruments through which the Islamic Republic exerts pressure on opposing parties.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Minister assures stable power supply for looming summer peak

Economy Desk

Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said on Monday that the country faces no electricity production shortfall and is in a much better position to secure energy supplies this summer, as authorities focus on curbing rising consumption and expanding renewable capacity.

"The most important policy of the new period at the Energy Ministry is to control consumption growth and move toward reducing energy use," Aliabadi said during a ceremony marking the launch of this year's summer peak-demand management programs and the unveiling of the "25 Degrees, A Pact of Solidarity" campaign, according to IRNA.

Aliabadi said Iran currently had no deficit in electricity generation capacity but needed to reach a level this year that would allow it to manage peak demand, adding that the entire power system should be aligned with that objective.

He said the ministry's approach was aimed at preventing unchecked growth in energy consumption and, if possible, reversing the trend, noting that energy demand growth in Iran was not consistent with population growth and needed to be corrected.

The ministry's spokesperson earlier expressed that electricity demand was expected to rise "by more than 5% this year," after Iran's peak electricity consumption hovered around 79,000 megawatts last summer.

"The Energy Ministry's goal is that, alongside consumption management, by making the business environment more attractive and increasing production capacity, we move toward eliminating imbalances and achieving a positive energy balance," Aliabadi said.

He said the government should move toward smart restrictions and capacity management instead of power outages, adding that around 70% of electricity consumption could serve as a useful indicator for planning and management.

"This means we can make consumption more rational without putting pressure on people," he said.

The minister also stressed the need to prepare infrastructure for changes in energy consumption patterns, particularly in transportation, to reduce energy waste.

"The necessary infrastructure must be provided on streets to supply people's energy needs through electricity. If we had created these infrastructures earlier, we could have supplied a large portion of the required electrical energy," he said.

According to Mehr News Agency, Aliabadi said the electricity demand of one million electric vehicles would be negligible compared with the large volumes of gasoline and diesel they would replace.

"We must move toward meeting people's needs through secondary energy sources such as electricity, and in this regard, the development of renewable resources in line with the country's cli-



mate is a priority," he said.

Also on Monday, Majid Ansari, the vice president for legal affairs, said in a joint meeting with the energy minister that achieving 15,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity through the expansion of solar power plants was one of the ministry's main missions.

Deputy Energy Minister Mohsen Tarzatab last week said the ministry was pursuing the consolidation of clean energy projects to raise Iran's renewable energy capacity to around 7,000 megawatts by late June, with the aim of reducing fossil fuel consumption, particularly natural gas and diesel.

Gov't reviews trade, transit expansion with neighbors in focus



Economy Desk

During a meeting on Monday attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian and senior transport officials, plans to expand import and export capacity through various ports, border terminals and rail transport network was reviewed, state media reported.

The meeting focused on strengthening trade flows and logistics infrastructure, while examining ways to increase coordination among executive bodies, accelerate transit procedures and remove bottlenecks at the country's entry and exit points, amid what Pezeshkian described as economic war conditions and regional developments. Pezeshkian said the use of neighboring countries' capacities for developing transport infrastructure, transit routes and joint investment is a key pillar of the government's economic policy.

"Using the capacities of neighboring countries for the development of transportation infrastructure, transit and joint investment is one of the key axes of the government's economic policy," he said. He also stressed the need to

maintain stable trade flows, ensure supplies of essential goods and improve the resilience of Iran's logistics infrastructure under economic pressure and regional volatility. The president called for greater coordination among government agencies, faster transit processes and the removal of barriers at ports and border crossings, citing the strategic role of the transport sector in economic management.

He further emphasized expanding economic diplomacy and strengthening regional cooperation with neighboring states, noting readiness expressed by some countries in the region to participate in infrastructure projects in Iran. Pezeshkian urged targeted use of such opportunities in the development of international transport corridors as well as rail and road projects.

He also praised the performance of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development in recent months, pointing to record levels in several areas, including the movement of essential goods, faster loading and unloading at ports and improved border clearance procedures.

He did not refer to the figures

cited by transport authorities on recent transit and rail freight performance.

Javad Hedayati, head of the transit office at Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, has recently said in an interview with the Young Journalists Club that road freight volumes had increased by 2.5 million tons, marking a new record in the transport of both oil and non-oil goods in the road sector.

Hedayati said new records had been registered in transit within the road transport sector, adding that the previous peak in cargo volumes dated back to 2014, when shipments of oil and non-oil goods reached 12.3 million tons. He said that after that period, no higher level of cargo movement had been recorded, and in some years volumes had declined.

He added that 14.75 million tons of goods were transited through Iran's territory in the past year via Iranian and foreign international road transport fleets, describing it as a new record for the sector.

Iran is seeking to expand the use of the Caspian Sea for trade and reduce reliance on southern maritime routes, as Tehran works to diversify logistics corridors amid external economic pressure. Since May 13 and after a 40-day illegal war of aggression, the US has imposed a so-called naval blockade on Iranian ports on the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil supply passes, disrupting shipping routes and energy trade.

India, oil importers to negotiate transit corridors with Iran: *Moody's*



With the Strait of Hormuz blockade choking crude supplies worldwide, financial services company Moody's Ratings has said that India and other oil importing countries may negotiate directly with Iran to secure energy imports. In a global report on geopolitical risks, Moody's said that a return to pre-war traffic volumes is unlikely in 2026.

The Indian government has not officially commented on such an agreement even as the Centre has pushed for nationwide fuel conservation efforts, according to moneycontrol.com.

According to the report, there is little prospect of a swift and durable settlement the US and Iran and with it the full reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Moody's said the transit flows will gradually improve, but through bilateral channels rather than a general reopening. This would allow some incremental improvement in energy transit flows from near-zero now, but the process will be slow, opaque and subject to interruption, according

to PTL.

"We expect oil importers -- particularly China, India, Japan and Korea -- to negotiate passage bilaterally with Iran, potentially through coordinated transit corridors such as those reportedly emerging near Larak Island and through Omani territorial waters... A return to pre-conflict traffic volumes in 2026 is unlikely," it said.

Moody's said even if safe passage in the Strait were to resume in the next six months, the oil market would remain supply-constrained, with persistently higher and more volatile energy prices and broader knock-on effects through costs, demand and financing conditions for exposed borrowers.

"We now expect Brent crude in the \$90-110/bbl range for much of this year, with significant volatility, including occasional fluctuations outside this range in response to new developments," Moody's said. At sustained Brent prices of \$90-110/bbl, Moody's estimates real GDP growth reductions of 0.2-0.8 percentage point for several major econo-

mies.

"India is among the most exposed, given around 46 percent of its crude oil imports come from the Middle East, its sensitivity to currency depreciation and pressure on its current account and fiscal management," Moody's said.

The Middle East conflict, which started with the US and Israel joint air strikes on Iran has entered its third month. The attack triggered the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a key chokepoint through which roughly one-fifth of the world's seaborne crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) passed in peacetime. Maritime traffic through the Strait has fallen by more than 90 percent from pre-conflict levels, with shipping activity curbed by risk aversion, high insurance costs and the presence of sea mines. Brent crude has fluctuated widely between \$90 and 4120/bbl.

The disruption to shipping through the strait has become a structural supply constraint to global energy flows rather than a temporary supply shock, Moody's said, adding that it expects the disruptions to continue through autumn. Moody's also warned that persistently higher energy prices and scarcity of energy products will feed into headline and core inflation.

"This will complicate the path for monetary policy across major economies, raise production costs across energy-intensive sectors, erode household purchasing power and tighten financing conditions for exposed borrowers," it said.

Nano-certified products hit record high as approvals reach 230

Economy Desk

The Islamic Republic has registered a new record in the development of nano-based products, with 230 products receiving nanotechnology certification last Iranian calendar year beginning March 21, 2025, a senior official said. "The 230 products received the 'nano-scale certification,' which is 40 products above the target set for the

development of nanotechnology-based products in March 2025, bringing the total number of certified products in the country to 1,965," said Saeed Sarkar, head of the Strategic Technologies Development Center at the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, according to Nour News.

He said certification is granted based on two main criteria; the use of nanotechnology with scientifically verified

dimensions below 100 nanometers, and evidence that the use of nanotechnology improves product performance, including quality, durability or efficiency compared with conventional products.

Sarkar said that in the past year, 653 product applications were referred to the evaluation group for nanotechnology products, while assessment of 32 additional files that had begun earlier

in the year continued.

He said 412 products were accepted for the next stage after submitting sufficient initial technical documentation, while 119 products were conditionally accepted pending completion of documentation, supported by the national laboratory network. Another 113 products were rejected for failing to provide minimum required evidence of nanotechnology use or due to applicant

withdrawal.

Following site visits, sampling, scale and performance testing and review of results, 230 nano-scale certificates and 36 experimental certificates were ultimately issued, he said.

He added that evaluation of 22 products was suspended due to production issues, lack of coordination for site visits, or withdrawal from the assessment process by applicants.

Iran ranks foremost in rosewater production: *Union president*

Our 'liquid gold' in pursuit of int'l markets



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

With the commencement of the second month in the Iranian calendar, Ordibehesht (April 21–May 21, 2026), the fragrance of the Damask rose (also known as the Iranian Rose) pervades the orchard-lanes of various locales like Qamsar, Niasar, and Barzak in Kashan, Central Iran. Thereby, the rosewater-extraction season, one of Iran's most venerable and renowned traditional rites, has been initiated. This ceremony, beyond its cultural and historical dimensions, has nowadays transformed into one of the nation's paramount economic and touristic capacities. The presence of thousands of domestic and foreign tourists at the traditional rosewater-extraction ritual attests to this product's exceptional status and its profound interconnection with Persian culture.

Iran, alongside nations such as Bulgaria and Turkey, is among the world's most prolific producers of Damask rose; nevertheless, the majority of Iran's renown in this domain derives from rosewater production — a commodity that, in addition to its extensive utilization within the food industry and religious ceremonies, also possesses its own consumers in the markets of Persian Gulf countries and certain European nations.

In recent years, the expansion of Damask rose cultivated land across various Iranian provinces, increased attention toward novel processing methodologies — such as essential-oil extraction — and concerted endeavors to generate augmented value-added from this product have led to a heightened attraction from economic stakeholders toward the flower and rosewater industry. Notwithstanding this, activists within this sector maintain that considerable untapped capacities persist for the development of exports and the augmentation of foreign-currency revenues derived from Damask rose derivatives — a capacity whose realization partially depends upon the removal of export impediments and a progression toward the production of more diversified goods.

This year, coincident with the Damask rose harvest season, favorable precipitation conditions and an absence of frost damage have amplified hopes for increased flower and rosewater production in the Kashan region. In this context, Iran Daily has conducted an interview with Akbar Alihaji, president of the Kashan Rosewater and Herbal Distillates Union, regarding production status, harvest timing, export capacities, challenges confronting the rosewater industry, and developmental plans for Damask rose processing. You may read the full transcript below:

Akbar Alihaji



IRAN DAILY: Currently, we find ourselves within the rosewater-extraction season in Kashan — recognized as the hub of Damask rose and rosewater production in Iran. Would you elucidate regarding the harvest timing of Damask rose and the cultivated lands of this product in the region and throughout the country?

ALIHAJI: Approximately 10% of all Iranian Damask rose is cultivated in the Kashan region. Until 10 years ago, we had 8 provinces engaged in Damask rose cultivation; however, currently, we possess approximately 18 provinces, and cultivation has expanded nationwide. Nevertheless, qualitatively, their products do not attain the standard of the Qamsar region and Kashan areas.

Nationwide, we possess approximately 20,000 to 25,000 hectares of Damask rose. Harvesting of Damask rose also occurs in regions such as Kerman, Shiraz, and other cities. Iran, along with several other countries — including Bulgaria and Turkey — ranks among those nations that control the world's greatest production of Damask rose.

Rosewater extraction in the Kashan region generally proceeds in three phases and occurs across three consecutive periods, each period lasting approximately 20 days. The first period pertains to flowers from the warm-climate zones of Kashan, commencing on April 14. The second period pertains to flowers from the foothill districts, commencing on Ordibehesht 25 (May 15), encompassing Qamsar and Barzak, and continuing until approximately June 5. The third period, however, pertains to the summer resort and cold-climate zones of Kashan, continuing approximately until late June.

Has rosewater extraction in Kashan evolved into an appealing touristic tradition, attracting numerous tourists annually?

Rosewater extraction is a beautiful and ancient ceremony that acquaints people with Kashan's old traditions and beauties. The Kashan rosewater-extraction ceremony possesses global renown and continues annually from late April until late June. This ceremony is conducted in the cities of Kashan, Niasar, Qamsar, and other surrounding towns wherein Damask rose is cultivated, and each year, a large number of domestic and foreign tourists participate therein. Rosewater extraction is performed annually, in traditional



Foreign tourists harvest Damask Rose (also known as Iranian Rose) by hand in one of the fields in Central Iran.
● IRNA

fashion, within large copper boilers, employing traditional methods and specific rites, which tourists find exceedingly captivating.

How has the production of Damask rose — and, consequently, rosewater — been this year?

This year, on account of the substantial precipitations we experienced in early spring, the flowering condition of the fields has been quite good compared to the previous year, and, fortunately, the flowers have not suffered from frost damage. The spring rainfall has been exceptionally excellent, and the flower quality and flowering rate of the fields are very good this year.

In the Kashan region, we possess approximately 2,700 hectares of Damask rose, wherein the average expected harvest per hectare ranges between 3.5 and 4 metric tons. This quantity was lesser last year, reaching approximately between 1 metric ton and 700 kilograms and

1 metric ton and 800 kilograms. That is, in total, we possessed approximately 6,000 to 7,000 metric tons of flowers in the Kashan region last year; nevertheless, it appears that this year's quantity shall be substantially greater. The flowering condition of the fields is very good this year, and it is projected that the production volume shall reach 10,000 metric tons.

In which primary domains is the Damask rose utilized?

Iran is one of the principal producers of Damask rose globally. In other major producer countries, diverse products are manufactured and processed from Damask rose — from essential oils and perfumes to other derivatives. In Iran, however, on account of cultural and religious considerations, the volume of rosewater production exceeds that of all other countries. Meanwhile, nations such as Turkey and Bulgaria utilize the majority of their Damask rose for essential-oil

production.

In the past several years, we have also entered the domain of essential-oil production, and recently, in collaboration with the Kashan Essential Oil Research Institute and the newly established Damask Rose Center, we are working on the development of these processing methodologies.

A country such as Bulgaria produces more than 100 types of products from Damask rose, not one of which is rosewater; whereas we mostly make one product from Damask rose. Of course, we do produce small quantities of essential oil, dried flowers, buds, and flower jam, which are utilized for export purposes. Essential-oil extraction naturally requires more advanced machinery, and its value-added is several times that of rosewater. Many Damask rose producers in Bulgaria or Turkey with whom we negotiate state that it is economically unjustifiable to allocate one kilogram of Damask rose



An Iranian man showcases fresh rose petals in his shop, reflecting Kashan's centuries-old tradition of producing some of the world's purest rosewater.
● KAIRI AUN/ALAMY

to produce one liter of rosewater, and that it is superior to extract essential oil from it.

Thus, may we assert that Iran ranks foremost globally in the domain of rosewater? In which primary domains is rosewater utilized?

Yes, in the domain of rosewater, we have ranked foremost globally from the beginning until now. The application of Damask rose in Iran is predominantly for its fragrance in religious ceremonies, the preparation of certain food items such as sholeh zard (Persian saffron rice pudding), and the production of confectionery and other food items. Rosewater does not possess significant application in cosmetic and hygiene products, although its consumption is recommended in traditional medicine. We typically export rosewater to Asian countries and, especially, to Persian Gulf nations, and a portion of this product also proceeds to Europe, where it is utilized primarily for food purposes and confectionery production. Rosewater possesses medicinal applications; nevertheless, in the cosmetic and hygiene industries, Damask rose essential oil — a domain in which Turkey is preeminent — is predominantly employed.

Rosewater is exported principally to Persian Gulf nations, and its primary consumption is for every day purposes because rosewater is exceptionally beneficial against heat exhaustion. In hot and arid regions — such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait — rosewater consumption is predominantly for food items, for alleviating heat exhaustion, and for its fragrance.

Is it possible to produce essential oil from rosewater as well?

We possess three types of essential oil. The first type of essential oil is the very fragrance of Damask rose, which we can extract in very minute quantities from the distillation of Damask rose with water, in addition to rosewater. The second type of essential oil is obtained from the steam distillation of rosewater, which possesses superior quality compared to the first type. The third type is the rose absolute essential oil (also called "tam", which is Arabic for "absolute"), obtained from combining the first and second types. This rose absolute essential oil is known as "liquid gold," possesses exceedingly high utility, and is very significant in terms of value-added and economic worth, being employed in the hygiene, cosmetic, and other industries. We



The overseas rosewater market is not a market whose volume one can predict with precision. However, rosewater is a product possessing commendable export value in terms of revenue; nevertheless, should a portion of the export impediments be removed, one could obtain exceptionally favorable revenue from the export of rosewater and other Damask rose derivatives.

possess the capacity to produce this essential oil; however, its volume is constrained.

What is the export status of rosewater and other Damask rose derivatives?

Exports have diminished this year, with a portion of this reduction attributable to wartime issues as well as disputes with Persian Gulf nations — such as the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait — which constitute primary importers of Iranian rosewater. Of course, the overseas rosewater market is not a market whose volume one can predict with precision. Numerous small

and large companies are active in this domain. Some Iranian companies, indeed, currently operate in Turkey and conduct their exports from there to European countries. Rosewater is a product possessing commendable export value in terms of revenue; nevertheless, should a portion of the export impediments be removed, one could obtain exceptionally favorable revenue from the export of rosewater and other Damask rose derivatives.

For example, one of our problems pertains to the export criteria of the Iran National Standards Organization (INSO). The INSO stipulates

that the minimum essential-oil content of rosewater shall be 12 (percent); whereas, nowhere else in the world does such a criterion exist, and it is supply and demand that determine the market. When a customer demands from me rosewater with a concentration of 10 or lower, I must be able to provide that same product. Such rosewaters possess lower purity and are employed for their specific purposes; however, Iran's National Standards Organization declares that any rosewater below 12 (percent essential-oil content) is not suitable for edible use.

A country such as Saudi Arabia

might request from us rosewater with a concentration of 2 (percent), which is merely to be fragrant and to be consumed as water; yet, unfortunately, domestic standards do not grant such permission, and if a product with a lower concentration is exported, it may be detained at customs and fail to receive export authorization. Consequently, if these problems are resolved, our exports shall increase dramatically, and the export value could multiply several times — even four- to fivefold. Currently, on account of these very problems, our export of Damask rose buds has exceeded that of rosewater.



A newborn has been laid in sheets covered with petals of Damask Rose (also known as Iranian Rose) during the rosewater-extraction ceremony in Central Iran.

Trump's war in Iran raising costs for rural communities, farmers, and food production

By Anne Knapke, Mark Haggerty & Kyle Ross
Senior fellows at American Progress

OPINION

As the Trump administration continues its blockade of Iranian ports and Iran limits passage through the Strait of Hormuz, prices for fuel and fertilizer continue to soar above prewar levels. Around one-third and one-quarter of the global seaborne fertilizer and oil trades, respectively, pass through this vital waterway. The supply shock has resulted in the highest diesel prices since 2022 and surging fertilizer prices, affecting farmers during already challenging economic times and increasing costs at nearly every step of the food supply chain. American rural households, in particular, are feeling the squeeze amid the highest gas prices in nearly four years — up 52 percent since February 27, before the war began. (see Table) And at a time when household budgets are already strained, sustained closure of the Strait of Hormuz will put pressure on a farming and food production system that is heavily reliant on oil, likely resulting in rising grocery prices for months to come.



Farmers fuel tractors in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, on April 2, 2026.

tionate impact on rural communities in the United States due to structural factors that are deeply embedded in the rural economy and rural livelihoods. Rural places are largely car-dependent for everyday living, with their residents logging more miles than their urban counterparts. This takes a toll on family budgets, as 2024 data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey show that rural households spend 26.7 percent more on gasoline — about \$600 throughout the year — than urban households, on average.

has increased from \$10 to \$16 per week, or \$46 to \$70 on a monthly basis. Low-income drivers face even greater cost burdens, as the share of household income spent on vehicle fuel is higher for those with fewer resources. Sustained high energy costs will also trickle down to other major budget expenses. Rural households utilize around 14 percent more energy than their urban counterparts and spend a larger share of their income on home energy costs, meaning a prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz into the summer could further increase the energy burden for these households as cooling needs drive higher energy consumption. Additionally, longer food supply chains for rural areas that require more diesel to transport food could contribute to more substantial grocery price hikes. And when household budgets are being squeezed on multiple fronts, spending on anything beyond necessities is bound to suffer in local economies.

Higher input costs hurting farm families

The gap between the cost of farming and crop prices has rapidly increased in recent years. In 2025 and 2026, farmers have experienced the largest gap between prices they paid for inputs and prices they received for crops in

recent decades, according to survey data from the National Agricultural Statistics Service. (see Figure) Recent increases in farm debt and bankruptcies further demonstrate the financial pressure the farming sector is already facing, and this administration's war of choice is making things worse in farm country. Diesel accounts for more than 60 percent of fuel expenditures for farm operations. Prices rising 51 percent from prewar times means that farmers in planting season now are spending at least \$350 more per day for a full run of just one tractor with a fuel tank capacity of 200 gallons. Additionally, the price of urea — the most common form of nitrogen fertilizer, critical during planting season — has spiked 27 percent above prewar levels. Although the United States is a large producer of both fertilizer and oil, those commodities are traded on global markets, making these higher prices unavoidable. The loss of US farms continues a slow decline, with the latest Census of Agriculture showing a loss of more than 140,000 farms from 2017 to 2022. High energy prices compress margins, and added supply shocks on input costs from the war push on already tight margins, disproportionately disadvantaging smaller operations, making them more likely to sell the farm or lease



American rural households are paying, on average, at least \$26 per week more at the pump, and an oil-dependent food supply chain means all Americans should expect more expensive grocery prices for months to come. Despite this, Trump told reporters regarding the war with Iran: "I don't think about Americans' financial situation."

The data currently utilize a 2011 baseline, meaning an index of 105 indicates a 5 percent increase in prices since 2011 and an index of 95 indicates a 5 percent decrease.

The war in Iran is increasing costs for fuel and fertilizer

Prices of select commodities as of May 14, compared with prewar levels

Indicator	February 27, 2024 (before the war started)	May 14, 2024	% Increase
West Texas Intermediate crude oil (WTI) per barrel	\$47.03	\$101.73	+116.3%
Brent crude oil per barrel	\$52.87	\$106.15	+100.0%
Dutch TTF Transfer Facility natural gas (TTF) per MWh	\$31.08	\$101.45	+127.0%
Gasoline per gallon	\$2.98	\$4.53	+52.0%
Diesel per gallon	\$3.76	\$5.67	+50.8%
Jet fuel per gallon	\$2.50	\$3.81	+52.4%
Heating oil per gallon	\$2.80	\$3.91	+39.6%
Urea (fertilizer) per ton	\$465.50	\$591.75	+27.1%

May 14 prices were collected before markets closed. Prices for gasoline and diesel reflect US averages, while jet fuel is the average for Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and New York. The February 27 price for urea represents the latest data available on February 26, while the May 14 prices for jet fuel and urea represent the latest data available on May 13 and May 12, respectively.

Operation Epic Fury likely cost more than \$33 billion by the time the cease-fire was announced on April 7, and few ships have navigated the Strait of Hormuz in the weeks since. If the war persists later into the year and continues to wreak havoc on energy and fertilizer markets, consumers and producers should not expect to see relief from rising prices any time soon.

Rural households paying disproportionately more for gas, energy
Higher oil prices exert a disproportional

Using this difference in spending, new Center for American Progress analysis shows that rural households are now paying an extra \$26 per week for gasoline, on average, compared with the average price before the war began, and urban households are paying an extra \$21. This translates into an extra \$114 and \$90 monthly per household, respectively, using the current average national price for gas and assuming consistent consumption trends. (see Methodology for details) The difference between what rural households pay for gas compared with urban households

their land to larger entities. There are 453 high-farming-concentration counties in the United States, and agriculture remains an important economic engine across rural America. In a system that is structurally already squeezing out small and medium-sized farmers, continued increased costs are unsustainable and will likely push more farmers out of business if the Strait of Hormuz does not reopen soon.

Higher oil, energy prices will push up grocery costs for consumers

From higher input costs on the farm to transportation, processing, cold storage, packaging, and distribution, the entire food supply chain is heavily influenced by energy prices. Energy is a big portion of the retail food dollar, and to the extent that energy costs are passed through the supply chain, we should expect food prices to track oil price movements. It will likely take some time for the full effects of rising costs to reach grocery store shelves, but estimates from Purdue University suggest that a sustained conflict lasting through the spring and summer could add 3 to 6 percentage points to food-at-home inflation over 12 to 18 months, based on historical trends of prior energy shocks. Grocery costs have already started rising, with 12-month food-at-home inflation increasing to 2.9 percent in April, the highest since August 2023.

As with gas prices, essentials such as food take up a larger share of household budgets for families with lower incomes. In fact, 33 percent of before-tax income went to paying for food for the bottom quintile of consumers in 2024, compared with 6.4 percent for the top quintile. The Trump administration's tariff policies have already substantially increased costs for American farmers and consumers alike. Now, Americans are again being forced to suffer the expensive consequences of the Trump administration's agenda through a war in the Middle East that will only continue to deepen the affordability crisis. Despite this, Trump told reporters regarding the war with Iran: "I don't think about Americans' financial situation." Trade-offs between gas money, energy bills, and groceries seem like impossible ones to make. Yet the Trump administration continues to make choices that make the impossible an everyday reality for too many families.

The full article first appeared on American Progress.

Asian Weightlifting Championships: Yousefi makes statement comeback with C&J gold, new world record

Sports Desk

Iranian weightlifter Alireza Yousefi marked his return to the global stage in style by setting a new world record of 261kg to win the clean & jerk gold in the men's superheavyweight event at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Gandhinagar, India, on Sunday.

Making his first international appearance in 18 months after recovering from knee surgery, the 22-year-old prodigy added snatch bronze and total silver to his haul as the Iranian two-man squad finished fifth in the overall medals table – which also featured the women's competition – with two golds as well as one silver and one bronze apiece.

Yousefi began his campaign with a 177kg lift in the snatch and then posted a successful 184kg effort before failing with his 189kg attempt, finishing third in the category behind Bahrain's Olympic bronze medalist Gor Minasyan (212kg) and Amir Abdullaev (189kg) of Uzbekistan. The Iranian, however, was in his

own league in the clean & jerk event later in the afternoon, lifting 248kg with his first effort to secure the top prize.

Following last year's weight class adjustments, new standard records were set by the International Weightlifting Federation, including 260kg for the clean & jerk in the men's +110kg division. Yousefi's second attempt ended in vain, but he bounced back to exceed the mark by one kilogram with his final lift of the day.

Minasyan settled for silver with 245kg – four kilograms clear of South Korean bronze winner Song Yeong-hwan.

Yousefi registered 445kg for the total silver, trailing Minasyan by 12 kilograms, while Song claimed his second bronze with 416kg.

Sunday's medals were the latest testament to Yousefi's emergence as a contender to dominate the superheavyweight class in the post-Lasha Talakhadze era. The two-time world junior champion made his senior international debut at the 2024 World Championships in impressive fashion,



stunning fellow Iranian Alireza Davoudi and Armenian Olympic silver medalist Varazdat Lalyan to claim the C&J gold with a then-continental record lift of

262kg, before winning bronze in the total with 456kg. Alireza Nasiri, also a two-time world junior gold medalist, was the other Iranian in action at the

Asian Championships, after the national governing body decided to dispatch a depleted squad amid the wartime circumstances in the country, and with Septem-



Iran's Alireza Yousefi makes a lift during the men's superheavyweight event at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in Gandhinagar, India, on May 17, 2026.

● AWF

ber's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games and October's World Championships on the horizon in a congested international season.

Nasiri had to recover from a disappointing start to his 110kg campaign on Saturday to finish with the clean & jerk gold.

The 20-year-old Iranian had three failed attempts (187kg, 188kg, 189kg) and missed out on the snatch podium, but delivered a much-improved performance in the clean & jerk, starting with 221kg. He then registered 231kg with his second effort, which proved enough for the Iranian prodigy to beat reigning Olympic champion Liu Huanhua of China to the top podium by one kilogram.

China dominated the medals table with a remarkable 21 golds, followed by North Korea, which collected 18 golds, Chinese Taipei (3) and Bahrain (3).

AVC Men's Champions League:

Keita on fire as Foolad falls short in final



Jakarta Bhayangkara Presisi's Malian opposite Nourmory Keita (R) hits a spike against Foolad Sirjan's Aleksandar Nikolov during the AVC Men's Champions League final in Pontianak, Indonesia, on May 17, 2026.

● AVC

Sports Desk

Iranian club Foolad Sirjan was denied a third continental crown in five years after suffering a 3-1 setback (25-20, 24-26, 25-23, 25-23) against Jakarta Bhayangkara Presisi in Sunday's AVC Men's Champions League final in Pontianak, Indonesia. Malian opposite Nourmory Keita made the difference between the two sides, chipping in a remarkable 38 points, including six aces, for the Indonesian outfit, which was backed by a crowd of more than 5,000 at the Terpadu Gymnasium.

The pinnacle of Keita's performance perhaps came in the closing stages of the fourth set when, with the score level at 23-23, he nailed back-to-back aces to secure a maiden continental title for

Indonesian volleyball. Slovenian outside hitter Rok Mozic added another 16 points, including two aces, for the host team, while his teammate Farchan Vachrezy Surya Putra put away 11 points, and Cuban middle blocker Robertlandy Simon contributed six.

Middle blocker Amirhossein Toukhteh and outside hitter Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh led the scoring for Foolad with 13 points apiece, while Bulgarian outside Aleksandar Nikolov – who joined the club on a short-term contract for the showpiece – finished on 12, including three aces.

Earlier in the day, JTEKT Stings Aichi hammered out a 3-0 (25-19, 25-19, 25-21) shutout of Hyundai Capital Skywalkers – thanks to a match-high 24 points from French opposite Stephen Boyer,

including three kill blocks – to claim the bronze medal. Brazilian star outside hitter Ricardo Lucarelli delivered 11 points toward the Japanese side's victory, while Chinese opposite Jiang Chuan was the South Korean Skywalkers' leading scorer with 14 points.

There was, however, a bit of consolation for Foolad in the award ceremony, as three of Behrouz Ataei's men were named in the tournament's Dream Team, collecting individual prizes.

Nikolov and Hosseinkhanzadeh jointly received the Best Outside Hitter honors, with Ali Ramezani picking up the prize for Best Setter.

Keita, who also won the Asian title with Qatar's Al Rayyan last year, was named Most Valuable Player and Best Opposite, while

teammates Simon and Gumilar Ahmad earned the Best Middle Blocker awards.

JTEKT Stings Aichi's Takahashi Kazuyuki was honored as Best Libero.

Foolad began the eight-team knockout tournament with a straight-set victory over Jakarta Garuda Jaya and then routed JTEKT Stings by the same scoreline to reach the final, making amends for last year's setbacks against Japanese opposition in the semifinal and bronze-medal contest in Kyoto. Despite the final heartbreak, Foolad will still join Bhayangkara Presisi in representing the continent at the FIVB Men's Club World Championship later this year, returning to the global showpiece after a bronze-winning campaign at the 2024 edition in Uberlândia, Brazil.

Iranian coach Mortezaei parts ways with Afghanistan futsal team

Sports Desk

Iranian coach Majid Mortezaei has officially ended his tenure as head coach of Afghanistan's men's national futsal team, the Afghanistan Football Federation announced.

The sport's national governing body confirmed that negotiations over a contract extension failed to yield a final agreement, bringing the curtain down on a history-making era for Afghan futsal. The Iranian led Afghanistan to its AFC Futsal Asian Cup debut in 2024, where his team suffered a quarterfinal setback against Tajikistan, but bounced back to beat Iraq and Kyrgyzstan in the playoffs to secure a maiden spot at the Futsal World Cup in Uzbekistan later that year. Afghanistan delivered impressive performances in the global

showpiece, beating Angola 6-4 before suffering defeats against Argentina (2-1) and Ukraine (4-1) – the two eventual semifinalists – to advance to the knockout stage. Their campaign, however, finished with a 3-1 setback in extra time against Paraguay in the round of 16.

Upon returning to the Asian Cup, Afghanistan again made it to the knockout stage in January – thanks to a runner-up finish behind Iran in the group – but was undone 6-0 by four-time champion Japan in the last eight.

Mortezaei was also in charge when Afghanistan held Asian powerhouse Iran to a 2-2 draw at the Islamic Solidarity Games last year, though his team ultimately missed out on a semifinal spot after finishing behind African champion Morocco and

Iran in the group table. "People in Afghanistan now recognize futsal as their number one sport, which is a source of pride for me," Mortezaei told ISNA, adding: "However, given the circumstances, repeating our previous achievements was not possible."

"When I took over, Afghanistan was ranked 109th in the world and 24th in Asia. Thank God, at the time of handing over the team, their world ranking was 21st and they were fifth in Asia. Finishing as runners-up in the CAFA championship, qualifying for the World Cup, and securing fifth place in the last Asian Cup were among the achievements we accomplished in Afghanistan," added the Iranian, who was shortlisted for Best Men's National Team Coach in the World at the Futsalplanet

Awards 2023, but eventually lost out to Morocco's Hicham Dguig. Mortezaei explained that Afghanistan's improved status brought higher expectations, but fundamental changes to facilities, scouting, and player development were not feasible.

"I didn't want to harm my reputation among the Afghan people, which is why, in an amicable atmosphere, we decided to part ways after four years."

When asked about his future plans, Mortezaei said: "I have had talks with an Iranian top-flight side and have also been approached by two national teams, though the outcomes remain uncertain.

"We have submitted a proposal to a Premier League team and are awaiting their response. My priority would be to work with national teams," he said.



Afghanistan head coach Majid Mortezaei celebrates his team's playoff victory over Kyrgyzstan in the 2024 Futsal Asian Cup, which saw them secure a maiden World Cup qualification.

● AFC

"It matters to me that I work with teams that have room for improvement – teams with un-

tapped talent like Afghanistan, where good coaching and facilities can make a real difference."

First Rafugari museum to open in Babolsar during Cultural Heritage Week

Iranica Desk

In line with the development of cultural heritage infrastructure and the support for the revival of traditional arts and handicrafts, Mazandaran Province has recently undertaken various initiatives to establish and strengthen specialized museums. In this context, and coinciding with Cultural Heritage Week (May 18-24), one of the province's key projects is set to be inaugurated.

The Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Mazandaran Province announced that the world's first Rafugari Museum will be inaugurated in Babolsar, during Cultural Heritage Week,

according to chtn.ir. Hossein Izadi emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating, "This is the world's first private museum dedicated to Rafugari, established with the aim of preserving the authentic art of Rafugari, introducing its role within Iran's carpet weaving tradition, and transferring the knowledge of master craftsmen to future generations."

He added that this center can become a hub for education, research, and cultural tourism in the province.

Izadi further stated, "In this museum, tools, historical artifacts, and traditional Rafugari techniques will be exhibited in order to enhance the cultural standing

of Mazandaran at both national and international levels."

Rafugari is one of the delicate and highly specialized branches of traditional handicrafts and carpet weaving. It involves the repair and restoration of damaged areas of handwoven carpets and textile works. This art requires precision, experience, and a deep understanding of carpet structure, colors, and patterns. Skilled practitioners of Rafugari use matching threads to reconstruct damaged sections in a way that leaves minimal visible traces of repair. Beyond its practical function, Rafugari plays an essential role in preserving the historical and cultural value of carpets and

textile artworks, effectively ensuring the continued life of this artistic heritage.

In addition, Rafugari is not only a technical craft but also a living expression of cultural identity and artistic continuity. It reflects the accumulated knowledge of generations of Iranian artisans who have preserved the aesthetic and structural integrity of carpets that often carry historical, emotional, and economic value. The establishment of a dedicated museum for Rafugari therefore represents an important step toward institutionalizing this knowledge, documenting rare techniques, and encouraging younger generations to engage with this highly specialized field.



IRNA

Semnan to tap transit traffic to boost tourism industry



jajiga.com

Iranica Desk

The head of the Association of Eco-Lodges and Traditional Accommodations in Semnan Province said the province's unique geographical location could help transform it into one of Iran's key tourism destinations by attracting at least 10 percent of travelers and pilgrims passing through its transit routes.

In an interview with ISNA ahead of National Eco-Lodge Day on May 21, Hadi Izadfar said Semnan Province possesses significant tourism potential.

He noted that the province is home to more than 1,000 historical monuments, around 900 of which have been nationally registered. In addition to its rich historical heritage, Semnan also boasts numerous natural attractions that could position it as a major tourism hub in the country.

Izadfar described the coexistence of diverse climates within the province as one of Semnan's unique advantages. Although widely known as a desert province, Semnan also benefits from mountainous landscapes and forest resources, offer-

ing considerable tourism opportunities.

He emphasized that more than 20 million pilgrims and travelers pass through the province each year, describing it as a highly valuable opportunity. "If we can attract even 10 percent of this potential market, the tourism industry could generate substantial economic benefits for Semnan Province," he said.

The tourism official added that many of the necessary conditions for tourism development are already in place, stressing that efforts should now focus on strate-

gies to attract at least one-tenth of travelers and pilgrims passing through the province.

According to Izadfar, Semnan has the potential to become one of Iran's leading tourist destinations. He added that expanding and completing tourism infrastructure would further boost the industry's growth in the region.

He also noted that six percent of Iran's total land area lies within Semnan Province and said tourism infrastructure has already been developed across various parts of the province,

creating opportunities for investors and tourism enthusiasts.

Izadfar called for greater support for tourism industry operators, particularly eco-lodges operating in different counties across the province, saying such support could contribute significantly to the growth of tourism in both Semnan and the country as a whole. He further announced that Semnan Province will host the annual gathering of Iran's eco-lodge operators in the city of Shahrud, with guests attending from across the country.

Reading Room

A forward-looking perspective on written heritage



By Akbar Irani
Head of Institute for
Written Heritage

This year, Iran finds itself in one of its most sensitive historical periods, a situation and crisis that few had anticipated on such a scale. Naturally, cultural and artistic institutions, like other organizations and state bodies, have also faced significant challenges and setbacks. This is largely due to serious disruptions in the country's financial and economic cycles, as well as a decline in state revenues. As a result, government support for the cultural and artistic sector has been uneven, and it is perhaps unprecedented for cultural and artistic communities to face such difficulties. The 19th of Iranian month of Ordibehesht (May 9) is officially designated in Iran's national calendar as "National Documents and Written Heritage Day". Each year, it coincided with the Tehran International Book Fair; however, during the COVID-19 pandemic and again in the current period, when holding in-person exhibitions has not been possible, this commemoration has not been observed in its usual form. Written heritage — the intellectual legacy of Iranian scholars and thinkers throughout

history — is among the treasures that has long been a source of national pride and a forward-looking reference for the future. The use of past heritage to better understand a country's future is a practice common to all nations with deep historical roots. Societies without such roots are either forced to rely on or appropriate the historical legacy of others, or to turn to sources lacking cultural and historical value.

Iran, with its long historical continuity both before and after the advent of Islam, possesses a vast corpus of manuscripts and written records, from stone inscriptions and epigraphs to later paper-based works. These texts carry the intellectual legacy of great thinkers whose ideas eventually reached far beyond Iran, influencing parts of the Western world. Approximately 500 to 600 years ago, works such as Avicenna's *The Canon of Medicine* and Al-Razi's *Al-Hawi* were printed and taught, while algorithms derived from Al-Khwarizmi's work were widely adopted and used. The importance of this written heritage and its impact on global knowledge is therefore undeniable. National Documents and Written Heritage Day provide

an opportunity for holders of manuscripts and custodians of archival materials in libraries and institutions to report how many manuscripts they have restored, acquired, or received. It is rare to go a month without encountering individuals in possession of historical documents or manuscripts.



Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Mehraneh Charity Hospital Museum in Zanjan, where a large collection of documents from the Mirzaei family dating back to the Qajar period—including the reigns of Fath-Ali Shah, Naser al-Din Shah, and Mozaffar al-Din Shah—is preserved. The history and culture of Zanjan are reflected in these documents, some of which have already been studied and published in newspapers and are currently being researched

and deciphered.

This situation exists, to varying degrees, in all cities, and the infrastructure for digitization is also available. In the future, greater attention should be given to facilitating researchers' access to these sources, and academic theses should increasingly focus on

manuscript studies, textual research, and critical editing. Over the years, the movement for manuscript revival has advanced steadily despite financial constraints and challenges. We now see numerous master's theses and doctoral dissertations devoted to these topics, shedding light on different aspects of Iranian history. These works, once identified and published, bring great intellectual satisfaction when introduced in academic journals.

One of the valuable initiatives undertaken last year by the Institute for written heritage was the publication of documents related to the delimitation of Iran's western borders, compiled by Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan Nazem-ol-Molk Marandi Yekanlu. From the late reign of Mohammad Shah Qajar until 1309 AH, he served for over fifty years as one of the senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Despite decades of administrative and intellectual efforts in defending Iran's territorial integrity along the western and northeastern borders, he remains a relatively unknown figure in modern historiography.

Fortunately, thousands of documents related to Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan's diplomatic efforts are preserved in the Political Science Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, covering both western and eastern Iran. These materials are accessible and were also displayed in an exhibition held during the conference "Azarbaijan, Diplomacy, and Territorial Integrity." At this conference, more than thirty scholars presented papers at the University of Tabriz. It was the first time such a large number of historians gathered in Tabriz to discuss diplomacy and border issues

in honor of a shrewd and capable statesman, Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan Nazem-ol-Molk Marandi Yekanlu.

He devoted more than fifty years of his life to serving in the four-border commissions involving Russia, Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and Iran, using logic and argumentation to defend Iran's rights, surveying vast territories, and ultimately contributing to the recovery of approximately fifty kilometers of Iranian land. Azarbaijan has been home to courageous figures such as Baqer Khan and Sattar Khan, and now Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan is being introduced as a figure who, through the power of writing and reasoning, defended the homeland and affirmed Iran's rightful claims.

Iranian libraries currently hold approximately 700,000 identified manuscripts, though the actual number is believed to be higher and continues to grow as new items are discovered. These manuscripts are evenly divided between Arabic and Persian texts. Globally, a vast number of Arabic and Persian manuscripts exist, many produced within the Iranian cultural sphere by Iranian authors.

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Iran pays tribute to Khayyam as his global legacy lives on

Arts & Culture Desk

Khayyam's enduring legacy as a poet, mathematician and philosopher took center stage on May 18 as officials, scholars and cultural figures marked Iran's annual commemoration of the 11th-century polymath in Nishapur and other cities nationwide. Celebrations focused on the global reach of Khayyam's work, from his philosophical quatrains and reforms to the Jalali calendar to his pioneering studies in algebra and astronomy, achievements that helped cement his stature far beyond the Persian-speaking world. President Masoud Pezeshkian, in a formal message, described

Khayyam as a rare convergence of "global science and Iranian literature," calling him a figure who mapped "dimensions of truth" across mathematics, astronomy and philosophy. He pointed to Khayyam's contributions to solving cubic equations, advancing non-Euclidean geometry and designing the Jalali calendar as evidence of his scientific precision. Pezeshkian urged younger generations to draw inspiration from his legacy in pursuing knowledge and cultural advancement. Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi framed Khayyam's work as part of a long-standing Iranian tradition of intellectual inquiry, saying his

poetry invites readers to reconsider "meaning, existence and the human condition." He said Khayyam's verse, which blends scientific reasoning with poetic expression, remains relevant in an age marked by speed and distraction, offering space for reflection and dialogue. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei also praised Khayyam as a "bright star of Iranian and human civilization," noting that his work shows the importance of questioning assumptions and resisting intellectual rigidity. He said Khayyam's legacy reflects a broader cultural heritage rooted in diversity of thought and philosophical depth.

Beyond official tributes, Khayyam's global resonance was again stressed by the enduring influence of 19th-century English translation by Edward FitzGerald, which helped introduce his quatrains to Western audiences and cement his reputation as a universal voice of existential inquiry. More than nine centuries after his death, Khayyam's concise verses continue to circulate across languages and cultures, distilling complex philosophical questions into brief, contemplative lines. In Iran's commemorations, he was once again presented not only as a figure of the past, but as a living intellectual presence in debates over knowledge, meaning and the limits of human certainty.



Minister hails museums as guardians of national memory



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri on Monday opened the country's Her-

itage Week and International Museum Day ceremonies at the National Museum of Iran in Tehran, casting the annual event as a celebration of Iran's "civilizational grandeur," national identity and cultural resilience in the face of recent attacks on historical sites. Addressing museum officials, restorers, scholars and foreign cultural guests gathered for the May 18-24 observance, Salehi-Amiri said Iran's vast historical legacy had become a pillar of national cohesion and soft power, CHTN reported. He described cultural heritage workers as custodians of the country's "an-

cient treasure" and said Iran remained "stronger and more united" through its historical memory and cultural continuity. The minister condemned recent strikes that damaged historical landmarks across the country, describing the attacks as a form of "civilizational hostility" targeting Iran's cultural identity. He said 149 historical monuments had sustained damage during what he called US and Israeli aggression against Iran. "Iran is a land of narratives, civilizations and humanity's historical memory," Salehi-Amiri said. "This heritage is a strategic asset that must be preserved

and presented to the world." He also highlighted Iran's international cultural footprint, saying the country holds more than one million historical artifacts and 43,000 nationally registered heritage sites, placing it among the world's leading centers of civilization and cultural influence.

'Standing in the Dust' shows heritage scars

Alongside the ceremony, officials inaugurated the photo exhibition 'Standing in the Dust' at the National Museum of Iran, showcasing 30 images documenting damage inflicted on historical

buildings and heritage sites during recent attacks. The exhibition presents visual narratives of scarred monuments, mosques and centuries-old structures, portraying what organizers described as the endurance of Iranian civilization through war and upheaval. Curators said the collection sought to underscore museums' role as guardians of collective memory and national identity. Held under the slogan "Museums, Guardians of Identity and National Unity," the exhibition was organized by the ministry's public relations and cultural affairs department.

Omar Khayyam: A philosopher for this world



By Asgar Ghahremanpour
Editor-in-chief

OPINION

On the anniversary of Omar Khayyam, it may be time to look beyond the familiar image of the solitary philosopher contemplating eternity. Khayyam was certainly a mathematician, astronomer, and poet of immense brilliance. Yet what makes him enduringly modern is not simply his philosophical skepticism, but his deep concern for human life as it is lived here and now. Khayyam belonged to a turbulent age shaped by political uncertainty, rigid orthodoxy, and social anxiety. In such a world, his poetry carried a quietly radical message: life itself matters more than dogma. While many thinkers of his time turned their attention toward metaphysical salvation, Khayyam turned toward the ordinary individual, toward joy, love, companionship, and the fleeting beauty of existence. From a sociological perspective, Khayyam can be read as a profoundly worldly and human-centered thinker. His verses repeatedly challenge fear-driven morality and rigid claims to absolute truth. He questioned those who sought authority through piety while making life harder for ordinary people. In doing so, he defended something remarkably simple yet deeply political: The right to live fully. This is why the secular dimension of Khayyam's thought remains so compelling. His secularism was not necessarily an outright rejection of faith, but rather a refusal to sacrifice human exper-

ience to abstract promises and imposed certainties. Again and again, he reminds readers that life is brief, uncertain, and irreplaceable. The tragedy, for Khayyam, is not death itself but failing to truly live before death arrives. Even the recurring image of wine in his poetry should not be reduced to literal indulgence. In many ways, wine becomes a metaphor for liberation, a symbolic rejection of hypocrisy, repression, and joyless conformity. His invitation to "seize the moment" is therefore more than poetic sentiment. It is a subtle form of social resistance against cultures of fear and denial. What distinguishes Khayyam from many classical philosophers is that he never loses sight of the human being behind the abstract idea. He does not ask people to withdraw from life in pursuit of unreachable perfection. Instead, he urges them to embrace the fragile and temporary nature of existence with honesty and dignity. Happiness, companionship, and inner freedom are not distractions from truth in Khayyam's world; they are part of truth itself. That is why Khayyam still feels strikingly contemporary nearly a thousand years later. In an age once again marked by anxiety, ideological certainty, and social fragmentation, his voice sounds unexpectedly modern. He reminds us that before becoming followers of doctrines or prisoners of fear, we are human beings, and that perhaps the deepest wisdom lies not in escaping life, but in learning how to live it well. As Khayyam himself wrote: "This meadow that delights us today Will grow from our dust tomorrow."

Tehran publishers call for stronger state support at virtual book fair

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's publishing industry is facing mounting economic pressures and requires greater government support, Tehran Publishers and Booksellers Union head Ibrahim Karimi said, as the seventh Tehran Virtual Book Fair opened on May 16 on the book.icfi.ir platform under the slogan "Let's read for Iran". Karimi said the virtual fair is intended to ease book

sales while reinforcing Iran's long-standing cultural engagement with literature, Nournews reported. He added that the format could be strengthened through broader cultural programming, including online sessions with writers, translators, poets and illustrators, to partially replicate the dynamics of physical exhibitions. He noted that the publishing industry is grappling with constrained liquidity,

declining purchasing power and rising production costs, which have driven print runs down to as low as 200-300 copies for many titles. He also pointed to administrative and structural challenges, including tax-related issues, insurance contributions and the proliferation of unauthorized reproductions of bestselling books, which he said have weighed on publishers.

Karimi said that while economic strain persists, recent months have shown a mild increase in footfall at bookshops, suggesting that public interest in reading remains intact. He added that reducing production costs would help ease retail prices and encourage wider readership, stressing that coordinated state support and cultural planning are essential to sustain the sector's long-term vitality.

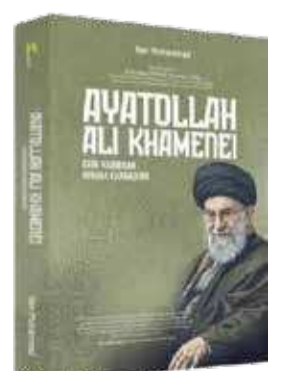
Indonesia publishes new biography of martyred leader

Arts & Culture Desk

An Indonesian publishing house has released a new Indonesian-language biography of Iran's former leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, expanding the reach of works on the Islamic Republic's leadership in Southeast Asia's largest Muslim-majority nation. The 304-page volume, titled 'Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: Dari Haribaan Hingga Keabadian' ('Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: From the Cradle to Eternity'), has entered Indonesia's publishing market through Penerbit Imania and is being distributed by the Mizan Group and Mizan Store network, Mehr News

Agency reported. Written in an analytical and narrative style, the book traces the life, intellectual outlook, political struggles and spiritual character of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, while examining his role in contemporary developments across the Islamic world. According to the publisher, the work reaches beyond a conventional biography, seeking to acquaint Indonesian readers with Ayatollah Khamenei's ideological steadfastness, civilizational vision and diplomatic and political approach. The release marks the second standalone Indonesian publication on his thought

issued since his martyrdom, with pre-orders reportedly drawing strong interest. The first standalone Indonesian-language title on Khamenei's thought, 'Dinamika Pemikiran Sayyid Ali Khamenei' ('The Dynamics of Seyyed Ali Khamenei's Thought'), appeared in October 2025. Jakarta-based Sadra Press issued the 417-page volume, a compilation of nine academic studies examining the late leader's Quranic psychology, social ethics, and civilizational outlook. Several Indonesian academics and researchers, including Middle East expert Professor Yun Mahmudhi, deputy for academic affairs



at the University of Indonesia, endorsed the publication, describing it as a profound study of principled resilience and ideological consistency.