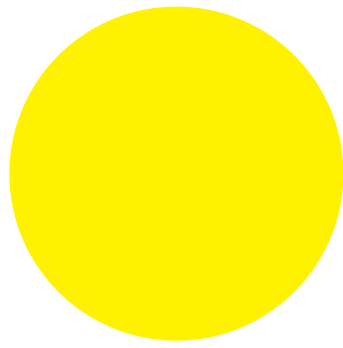


Geneva labor forum hears Iran's call for peace, worker protection



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President Masoud Pezeshkian (right on the screen) remotely opens a railway linking Ardabil to Mianeh in northwestern Iran on June 9, 2026. IMNA



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Iran's response to Israeli strike on Beirut aimed to upend cost-free pressure strategy

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

In the latest exchange of fire between Iran and Israel, the United States sought to distance itself from the confrontation and even appeared to play the role of a mediator. International affairs expert



Abbas Aslani argues in an interview with Iran Daily that this does not reflect a serious rift between the two allies. Rather, he believes Washington is trying to keep pressure on the Islamic Republic and the Axis of Resistance in place while keeping tensions below a certain threshold and avoiding the full costs of escalation. According to Aslani, Iran's recent strike in response to Israel's attack on Beirut was intended to disrupt that equation.

IRAN DAILY: Should Washington's recent approach be seen as evidence of a genuine rift between the United States and Israel?

ASLANI: It appears that, strategically and in terms of their overall approach toward Iran, there is no serious disagreement between them. However, given that the Americans currently seem unwilling to see a region-wide war reignite, they have sought to continue exerting pressure on Iran in the political, economic, and even military spheres while ensuring that tensions and hostilities do not rise beyond a certain level.

If we look at the recent developments in the Strait of Hormuz and the exchanges of fire between Iran and the United States, we can see that the level of confrontation remained limited and carefully contained. The Israelis were also trying to continue their attacks against Lebanon within that same framework while pursuing the shared US-Israeli objective of weakening Iran and the Axis of Resistance. Iran's recent action against Is-

rael was aimed at halting that cycle and disrupting that trajectory. Had the United States become directly involved, there was a possibility that tensions could have escalated further. That is why Washington tried to signal that it either opposed Israel's actions or was not fully informed of them, to prevent the resumption of a broader regional war. But this does not necessarily mean the United States disagrees with Israel's policies toward Iran or even Lebanon. In fact, if Washington had genuinely opposed Israel's actions, it could have prevented Israeli attacks on Lebanon or even Israeli responses against Iran. It is worth recalling the 12-day war of June 2025. In the lead-up to that conflict, media reports suggested that Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Trump disagreed over attacking Iran. Yet shortly afterward, Israel launched its attack, and the United States joined in. Later, American media reported that the US administration itself had encouraged coverage portraying the two countries as being

at odds.

In reality, the United States wanted to maintain pressure on the Islamic Republic and the Axis of Resistance without paying a cost. Iran, however, sought to alter that equation and reshape their calculations by demonstrating that continuing the current policy could impose costs on them. If Israel intends to continue its attacks on Lebanon, it should naturally expect to bear the consequences and costs, and the United States is not immune from that process either.

In addition, the United States and Israel were attempting to separate Lebanon from the broader framework of Iran-US negotiations so they could exert pressure on Lebanon independently, whether through military strikes or political pressure. Iran's recent action was intended to stop that effort. It was also aimed at reinforcing the unity of the various fronts and arenas within the Axis of Resistance.

Israel's strike on Beirut's

southern suburbs came just as a message from a Pakistani mediator had reached Tehran and some US officials were speaking about progress toward an agreement. Can this attack be viewed as a deliberate attempt to derail diplomacy, or was Israel simply acting in line with its own security considerations?

I think it was a combination of both. We have consistently seen that any effort to establish diplomatic engagement or reach an agreement between Iran and the United States has faced disruptive intervention from Israel. This time was no exception. Part of their effort is naturally aimed at creating leverage for the United States so that Washington can extract greater concessions from Iran. But first and foremost, they seek to prevent such an agreement from taking shape. Israel generally favors the continuation of conflict and believes that, among regional actors, it stands to gain the most from a prolonged state of confrontation. This time, as negotiations con-

tinued and mediation efforts regained momentum, Israel intensified its attacks in Lebanon, fully aware of Iran's stated red lines and sensitivities, to disrupt the diplomatic process. At the same time, they were also pursuing their own security objectives by seeking to further weaken the Axis of Resistance and Hezbollah, thereby expanding their freedom of action in Lebanon.

Given the deep-rooted differences between Iran and Israel over regional issues, is a durable agreement between Iran and the United States fundamentally achievable?

One of the factors that has consistently cast a shadow over efforts to reach an understanding between Iran and the United States has been Israeli interference. Particularly in the current period, Israel has played a significant role in shaping the direction of US policy in the region, making the path toward an agreement considerably more complicated.

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'Politically motivated': Tehran blasts US-backed IAEA draft resolution

International Desk

Iran dismissed a joint draft resolution submitted by the United States, Britain, France, and Germany to the UN nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors as "politically motivated and provocative," accusing its sponsors of seeking to shift responsibility for aggression from the perpetrators to the victim. The US is lobbying other countries on the UN nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors to back the draft resolution demanding Iran to provide "precise" information on its enriched uranium stockpile and give the UN nuclear agency access to its nuclear sites "without delay."

In a non-paper distributed to the board's members ahead of a possible vote on the resolution, seen by IRNA, Iranian mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) argued that its compliance with safeguards obligations cannot be assessed in isolation from the current security environment and the unprece-

dent circumstances created by US and Israeli attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities. According to the document, the IAEA director general's own report shows the current situation is a direct consequence of military strikes against Iran. It cited the report's second paragraph, which states that the agency halted verification activities in Iran following the onset of military actions and, citing safety concerns, withdrew all its inspectors from the country by the end of June 2025. Iran stressed that the suspension of inspections at certain sites was the IAEA's own response to the aggressive acts and exceptional security conditions caused by the US-Israeli aggression against Iran. Nonetheless, the draft resolution describes the situation as if conditions were completely normal and no attacks had occurred, according to the Iranian delegation. The Iranian delegation said that the current security environment was created by the same country that is now proposing the draft resolution. In other



Chairperson of the IAEA's Board of Governors for 2025-2026 David Grainger Biggs, is seen on two screens (C) as he opens the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors' Meeting at the agency's headquarters in Vienna, Austria on June 8, 2026.

● JOE KLAMAR/AFP

words, Iran said, the United States, after creating the crisis by attacking Iran's nuclear facilities, is now seeking to use the consequences of the crisis as allegations against Tehran before the IAEA board. Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Vienna on Monday warned against any anti-Iran move at the IAEA, saying that "coercion and confrontation" undermine prospects of a diplomatic solution. Last week, the IAEA in a confidential report reiterated that the lack of access to nuclear sites in Iran constituted a "proliferation concern." During the previous 12-day aggression



by the US and Israel against Iran in June 2025, three Iranian nuclear facilities were heavily bombed by the US military. Nuclear facilities have also been hit in the latest war, which erupted on Febru-

ary 28. Prior to US strikes in June 2025, the IAEA calculated that Iran possessed approximately 440 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60 percent.

Iran, US press ahead on text of possible deal: UN envoy

International Desk

Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Amir-Saeid Iravani said on Monday that Tehran and Washington are still exchanging views to finalize the text of a possible agreement to end the US-Israeli aggression against Iran. Speaking to reporters after a UN Security Council meeting in New York, Iravani said that both sides have yet to reach consensus on the final document, expressing hope that negotiations could yield a conclusion in the near future. Asked whether an agreement could be reached by the end of the month, he replied, "We hope so." On Sunday, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, whose country is mediating negotiations between Iran and the US, delivered a message from the country's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif



Amir-Saeid Iravani
● AFP

addressed to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei. Talks have been at an impasse due to the US excessive demands in recent weeks. However, the mediator Pakistan is trying to revive the negotiations which aim to produce a memorandum to end the joint US-Israeli aggression against Iran, end a blockade on Iran's ports, and secure the release of frozen Iranian assets. US President Donald

Trump on Tuesday said negotiations are in their final stages, after Iran and Israel halted fresh attacks that threatened to reignite the months-long conflict. Iran fired missiles at Israel on Sunday in response to strikes against Lebanon's Hezbollah in the southern suburbs of Beirut, before Israel struck back despite Trump's efforts to dissuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from doing so. Iran and Israel "were going back and forth and

now they both agreed through me to stop and we're in the final throes of what will be a very, very good deal," the US leader told reporters on his return from an NBA Finals game. When asked whether a deal would be a matter of days or weeks, he said it would take "two or three days." Tehran is insisting a halt to the conflict between Iran and the US must include a truce in Lebanon. In the recent escalation of attacks, Iran fired nearly 30 missiles at Israel, according to the Israeli military, while Israel struck military and industrial sites in Iran. Iran said on Tuesday that two members of the "Army Air Defense Force" were killed in Israeli strikes a day earlier. And despite Iranian demands, Israel has kept up its attacks on Lebanon, where it is fighting Hezbollah.

President felicitates Armenian PM on parliamentary election victory

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian congratulated Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his Civil Contract Party on their victory in Armenia's parliamentary elections, expressing confidence that bilateral ties will continue to expand in the coming years. In a message addressed to the Armenian prime minister on Monday, President Pezeshkian described the renewed support of the Armenian people for Pashinyan's government as a sign of their desire to pursue policies aimed at strengthening peace, development, stability and regional cooperation in the South Caucasus region. The Iranian president said he was confident that the positive and dynamic trend that has characterized relations between



Tehran and Yerevan in recent years would be further reinforced through broader and more constructive cooperation between the two neighboring countries. Armenia's governing Civil Contract party won the elections seen as a sign of its handling of a peace deal with Azerbaijan and its growing turn to the West. Pashinyan's party won 49.8% of votes with all polling stations counted from Sunday's ballot, enough to secure a parliamentary majority under Armenia's electoral system, the Central Election Commission (CEC) said on Monday.

Qalibaf highlights pursuit of both war, diplomacy to uphold national rights

International Desk

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said the country's strategy to put an end to the current US-Israeli aggression is to simultaneously pursue war and diplomacy to defend the rights of the Iranian nation. In an audio message addressed to the Iranian nation released on Monday, Qalibaf said that Iran is ready to immediately resume its military operations to respond to US and Israeli violations of the ceasefire announced in early April. His comments came after Iran carried out missile attacks on the Israeli regime in response to its violations of the terms of the

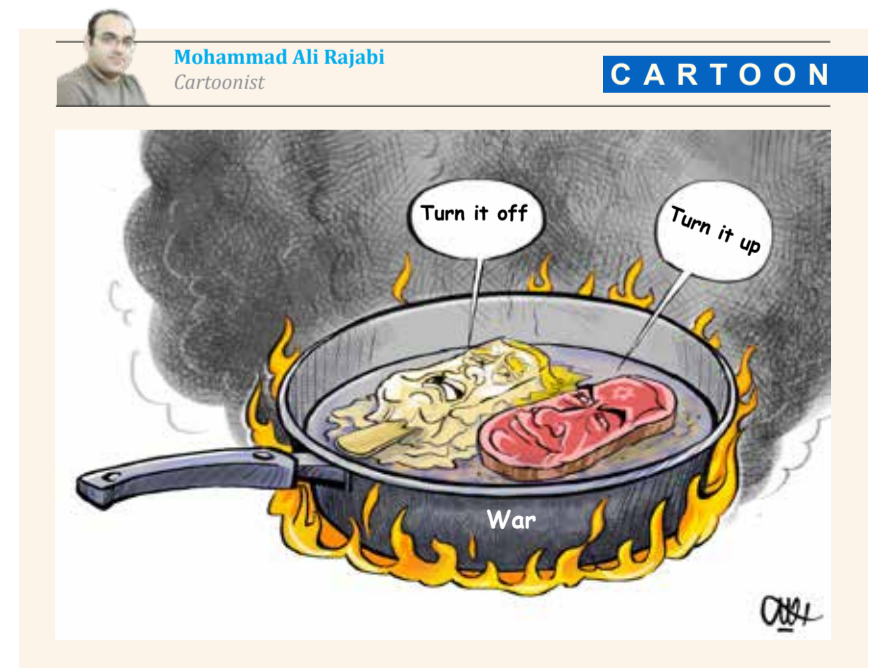
ceasefire, which also include the cessation of hostilities in Lebanon. The operation came despite ongoing efforts to mediate a deal between Iran and the US that could put a permanent end to the US-Israeli aggression on the country that began in late February. Qalibaf, who has led Iran's indirect negotiations with the US, said Tehran has been serious in its pursuit of diplomacy to end the aggression. However, he insisted that military response to US violations of the ceasefire in the Persian Gulf and against Israel's attacks in Lebanon is also a firm part of Iran's strategy to reach its objectives in the current confrontation.

Iran's response to ...

Israel has sought to push radical or maximalist demands onto the American side for pursuit at the negotiating table. Part of the responsibility for this also lies with the Trump administration, which has left the door open to the influence of the Israeli lobby, allowing Israel to capitalize on that opportunity. Beyond that, President Trump's own personal characteristics and political style have made reaching an agreement more difficult. Iran-US negotiations are not built on trust. However, for any negotiating process to reach a tangible outcome, there must at least be a degree of confidence within the negotiating framework itself—not necessarily between the parties, but confidence in the process. Because that stability and predictability have been lacking, and because the American side has not demonstrated a consistent approach, the prospects for any

agreement have become increasingly uncertain. The United States appears to be seeking an agreement that delivers gains without requiring meaningful concessions. It wants to claim that any deal it reaches is better than the Obama-era agreement—or even the best agreement ever achieved. That makes the negotiating environment even more difficult. At the same time, because Trump previously criticized the Obama administration for easing sanctions and providing funds to Iran, he remains concerned that if an understanding is reached and similar measures are taken, he will face criticism and political pressure from his rivals or even from within his own camp, and particularly from Israel. As a result, he repeatedly shifts his positions, making the prospect of an agreement even more challenging. Moreover, the two sides are still in the phase of seeking common

ground and drafting a framework, which can differ substantially from actual implementation. Reaching an understanding is not the end of the process; it is only the beginning. Yet even at this preliminary stage, no agreement has been achieved. It appeared that by making positive statements about the possibility of an understanding, the United States was primarily seeking to buy time and prolong the process. This would allow economic pressure to remain in place, enable Israel to continue its actions in Lebanon, and allow the United States to periodically take steps in the Strait of Hormuz without offering concessions. At the same time, it would help preserve stability in financial and energy markets and prevent tensions from escalating beyond a certain threshold. Taken together, these factors provide little reason for optimism about the prospects of reaching a genuine understanding.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

Pezeshkian hails completion of Ardabil-Mianeh railway after 22 years

Economy Desk

Iran has completed the 173-kilometer Ardabil-Mianeh railway in northwest of Iran after 22 years despite crises, wars, sanctions and other challenges, President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Tuesday.

According to IRNA, Pezeshkian made the remarks during a webinar marking the inauguration of the railway line, saying construction of the project had begun more than two decades ago. He said that, based on standard procedures and the usual pace of project execution in recent years, the remaining sections should have taken three to four years to complete, but the government finished the work within 18 months by mobilizing all its capabilities.

"The completion of this project has shown that the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to move forward even under the

most difficult crisis conditions and, with the cooperation of officials, lawmakers and the noble people, will overcome challenges," he said.

The country, already hit by Western sanctions over its nuclear program, has also faced growing external economic and maritime pressure following a US-Israeli military conflict that began on February 28. The tensions were accompanied by additional US restrictions targeting Iran's shipping and oil trade, including measures described as a naval blockade imposed since mid-April.

The railway line was completed to facilitate passenger and freight transportation, expand transport infrastructure in northwestern Iran and respond to the long-standing demands of the people of Ardabil Province.

Also speaking at the official inauguration ceremony on

Tuesday, Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd described the railway project as "a technical and engineering masterpiece created by the sons of Iran and a symbol of resilience in the face of limitations."

The project consists of 12 sections, with 35% of the route passing through mountainous and difficult terrain, 45% through hilly areas and 20% across plains.

Its technical features include the country's tallest railway bridge, standing 81 meters high, 27 kilometers of tunnels and the excavation of seven kilometers of galleries, making it one of Iran's most challenging infrastructure projects.

According to project officials, the Ardabil-Mianeh railway ultimately included the construction of 62 tunnels with a combined length of 23,810 meters, four kilometers of large valley



Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd unveils a memorial plaque at the inauguration of the 173-kilometer Ardabil-Mianeh railway on June 9, 2026.

© mrud.ir

bridges, three kilometers of waterway bridges and 10 galleries extending four kilometers.

The scale of construction was extensive, requiring about 35,000 metric tons of steel materials, including structural

steel, reinforcing bars and cables, as well as approximately 220,000 metric tons of cement to complete the railway.

Mobarakeh Steel furnace resumes production after wartime damage

Economy Desk

A production furnace at Iran's Mobarakeh Steel Company that was damaged during an Israeli attack has resumed operations after repairs, Industry, Mine and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak said on Tuesday.

According to Mehr news agency, Atabak said at the site that Furnace No. 8 at Mobarakeh Steel "today was brought back into production through the efforts of specialists and workers after sustaining damage during the attack."

"Steel is one of the most influential sectors in the national economy and employment, particularly Mobarakeh Steel, which, as the country's largest steel complex, plays a significant role in Iran's industrial production and development," he said. Mobarakeh Steel and Khuzestan Steel, which account for nearly half of the country's steel output —



Furnace No. 8 at Mobarakeh Steel resumes operations in a ceremony attended by Industry, Mine and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak (4th L), along with specialists and workers, on June 9, 2026.

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were targeted in airstrikes during the US-Israeli war that began in late February, according to industry sources. The attacks in March struck storage silo facilities, the sources said.

He said assessments showed that 3,003 industrial units across the country had sustained damage. Many of them, including the Mobarakeh Steel complex, were key upstream industries whose products serve as raw materials for a large number of companies and downstream manufacturers.

Analysts at Morgan Stanley have

estimated that the attacks eliminated between 13 million and 15 million metric tons of Iran's annual steel production capacity. That loss is equivalent to 24% to 27% of the country's total installed capacity and roughly 41% to 47% of Iran's estimated 2025 steel output.

Vahid Yaghoubi, secretary of Iran's Steel Association, also announced last month in a report on the industry's postwar outlook that the country's steel sector was expected to maintain its position as the world's 10th-largest producer despite losing about 30% of its capacity in the attacks.

Tehran airport says foreign airlines set for return 'in coming weeks'

Economy Desk

A senior official with Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport City announced on Tuesday that foreign airlines have begun the process of returning to the Iranian market "in the coming weeks."

Javad Salehi Artimani, deputy for airport operations at the Imam Khomeini International Airport City Company, said the airport was ready to handle all scheduled and extra flights after maintaining operational readiness during a period of flight restrictions.

"With the completion of the audits and evaluations required by foreign airlines in line with national and international standards, we will witness the gradual return of foreign carriers and an increase in the number of international flights in the coming weeks," he said.

Salehi Artimani said that throughout the period of flight restrictions, airport infrastructure, equipment and operational personnel remained fully prepared while planning was carried out

to ensure the rapid and safe resumption of services, he added.

Iran's airspace gradually reopened after a ceasefire was reached between Washington and Tehran on April 8, ending a 40-day conflict launched by the US-Israeli coalition in late February.

Last month, Imam Khomeini International Airport City Chief Executive Ramin Kashaf-Azar said foreign airlines were in talks to resume flights to Iran and had announced their readiness to return to the market. He said negotiations were underway as conditions stabilized following the conflict.

Iran Air European routes

Separately, Iranian lawmaker Mohammadreza Rezaei Kouchi told ILNA on Saturday that, after about a year of legal follow-up and continuous negotiations, Iran Air would once again operate flights to European destinations. He said European routes for Iran Air would gradually become operational and described the development as the result of what he called Iran's display

of military strength in recent months, as well as continued negotiations and dialogue with the other parties.

The European Union imposed sanctions in October 2024 on seven individuals and seven entities, including Iran Air, Saha Airlines and Mahan Air over their alleged links to Iranian transfers of ballistic missiles to Russia. According to Tasnim, Iran Air Chief Executive Taher Abdolahi said last week that the efforts to resume flights to European destinations were ongoing.

However, there has been no official announcement from the EU indicating that the sanctions have been lifted. Instead, the Council of the European Union has decided to extend EU sanctions in response to alleged human rights violations in Iran until April 13, 2027.

Rezaei Kouchi also said two Airbus A330 aircraft had returned to the Iran Air fleet after financial issues were resolved. He said the aircraft had previously been taken back from the airline and were returned after those financial problems were settled.

Minister says 30m cubic meters of gas processing capacity restored after war

Economy Desk

Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Tuesday that Iran has restored about 30 million cubic meters of gas processing capacity lost during the US-Israeli war, which began in late February. Speaking at a meeting with lawmakers in Parliament's Article 90 Commission, Paknejad said around 30 million cubic meters of the 230 million cubic meters of gas processing capacity that had been lost during the conflict had now been recovered.

He made the remarks during the session with members of the parliamentary commission, describing the restoration as a recovery of part of the country's lost gas pro-



cessing capacity. Israeli air strike in March damaged several gas-processing facilities along the coast of Bushehr Province.

The partial recovery follows earlier efforts by the oil and gas sector to restore production after the conflict. Touraj Dehqani, chief executive of the state-run Pars Oil and Gas Company, said previously that technical and operational measures implemented in

the downstream sector, together with the use of spare capacity at operating refineries, had helped mitigate the impact of the disruption.

Dehqani also said gas extraction had resumed at three offshore platforms in the South Pars gas field after output was suspended following the air strike. The offshore platforms themselves were not damaged in the attacks, he said.

War-inflicted communication infrastructure losses hit \$386m: ICT chief



Sattar Hashemi
© IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Minister Sattar Hashemi said on Tuesday that damage to the country's communication infrastructure during a recent 40-day war with a US-Israeli coalition was estimated at 68 trillion rials (\$386

million). Speaking at his first postwar press conference with reporters, Hashemi outlined damage to the space industry and communications infrastructure following the conflict, which began in late February, according to IRNA.

"During this war, parts of the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology's infrastructure were damaged, with total estimated losses across all sectors announced at around 68 trillion rials," he said.

He said a significant portion of the damage was related to the space industry, including the

Iranian Space Research Center (ISRC) and several ground stations.

"However, the most important point is that, fortunately, there were no casualties in these incidents," he said.

He added that some equipment that could be moved had been relocated before being damaged, but other systems could not be transferred quickly due to complex dismantling procedures and time-consuming relocation requirements, and were therefore damaged.

During the conflict, 500 communication sites and more than 100 telecommunications centers were hit, he said.

FIFA World Cup 2026

Geopolitical tensions at play off the pitch

By Mariel Ferragamo & Ivana Saric
Editors at the Council on Foreign Relations

OPINION

The mantra of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), soccer's global governing body, is famously that "football unites the world." But this summer's men's World Cup is set to kick off with both sports and geopolitical tensions on display.

This is the first World Cup to be hosted by three nations: the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The United States' relations with its two neighbors, however, have strained during the second Trump administration over trade, immigration, and border policies — marking a dramatic shift since the three countries initially planned to cohost back in 2017. Amnesty International warned that the United States' new hardline immigration and border policies could affect fans and players from competing countries. US military actions abroad, particularly in Iran, have also raised tensions.

As for signs of how rapidly the situation could evolve, the administration waived a \$15,000 visa bond affecting fans from five African countries only weeks before the tournament's start. And amid the ongoing Iran war, FIFA permitted the Iranian national team to move their base camp from the

as the 2028 Summer Olympics, so the administration said that athletes, coaches, and support staff for those tournaments — among a select few other sporting events — would be exempt from such restrictions. The State Department clarified that "only a small subset of travelers" would qualify for the exemption, suggesting that fans and foreign spectators, media, and corporate sponsors from countries restricted by the Trump administration's travel policies could be excluded.

Four countries whose teams have qualified for the World Cup fall under Trump's travel ban: Haiti and Iran face full entry bans, while the Ivory Coast and Senegal face partial restrictions. Fans from those countries will be unable to attend World Cup games hosted by the United States unless they are also US residents or dual nationals with countries not on the travel ban list.

Many other qualified countries are on the Trump administration's visa pause list, including Egypt, Ghana, Jordan, Morocco, Uruguay, and Uzbekistan, which only applies to immigration visas. "That shouldn't stop fans from those countries from getting tourist visas," explained CFR immigration expert Edward Alden, "but you can certainly expect that anybody coming from those countries is going to face an extra level of scrutiny."

For fans who clear the legal entry



The map shows the many countries in the 2026 men's World Cup that face US travel or visa restrictions. Restrictions include the travel ban, the pause in immigrant visa processing, and the requirement of a visa bond.
● FIFA/CFR

United States to Mexico. While FIFA confirmed that the team would cross the US border to play their scheduled group-stage matches, the players were still awaiting their visas in the days ahead of the June 11 opening.

The United States is set to host roughly three-quarters — 78 of 104 — of the World Cup matches in eleven US cities. Canada and Mexico will each host thirteen games across two and three cities, respectively. Given the geopolitical tensions surrounding the tournament, onlookers are questioning how this World Cup — which is expected to attract more than one million international visitors — will actually play out.

"I don't think this is going to be as smooth as previous World Cups," CFR Africa expert Ebenezer Obadare said.

Earlier this year, the Trump administration enacted a travel ban that fully or partially bars citizens from 39 countries from entering the United States. It has steadily added travel restrictions, including halting immigrant visa processing for 75 countries.

The United States is hosting the men's World Cup this year as well

barriers to attend US games, another hurdle is cost. Aside from this year's games having the most expensive tickets of any cup so far, the Iran war caused airline prices to soar, and non-immigrant visa holders from five participating countries — Algeria, Cape Verde, the Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Tunisia — expected to face a \$15,000 bond requirement to attend matches on US soil. In mid-May, the US government waived the requirement for fans from those five countries who had purchased tournament tickets as of mid-April.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) could also ramp up screenings for visitors from countries not affected by current travel restrictions. One proposal would require applicants from 42 countries — including close US partners — to hand over troves of online data, though it remains unfinalized just a week before the tournament's opening. US Customs and Border Protection confirmed in May that the new rule likely would not be finalized until later this year, but the agency planned to conduct more targeted social media screenings of select



The Iran squad and staff stand in front of a giant poster that depicts them performing a military salute, during a farewell ceremony in Tehran before their departure for the 2026 World Cup.
● ATTA KENARE/AFP

travelers.

High costs, intense application processes, and bans aside, Alden suggested another barrier could be psychological: "Are people going to be scared to enter the United States?"

Obadare noted that the 2026 World Cup will be monumental because it features a record 10 teams from African countries. However, many African fans with visas to enter the United States chose to make other arrangements. "They're saying there's something about this atmosphere — 'I don't want to get to an airport and then have to explain myself for three hours and then somebody says, can I see your phone?'" Obadare said. "So, they're giving the United States a wide berth and going to Canada or Mexico."

Another consequence of the travel restrictions could play out in the psychology of the games themselves, Obadare contended. "There's something about having your fans in the stadium, rooting for you, shouting their heads off," he said, remembering when fans from his home country, Nigeria, flocked to Atlanta for the 1994 Olympics. "If you don't have those people in the stands, it's not the same thing."

What about safety at the tournament?

Several aspects of the games are under scrutiny when it comes to perceived threats to safety:

• **Venues.** Security during major sporting events is always a concern. That's particularly true for this year's World Cup, which is the largest version of the tournament ever held. The US government has awarded \$846 million in grants to nine US host states to shore up cybersecurity, emergency response preparedness, security, and drone protection across the 11 US host cities.

Intelligence briefings from US officials and FIFA obtained by Reuters warned on March 20 that the potential for extremist attacks on the games, fan events, or transportation infrastructure — as well as civil unrest — had grown because of heightened tensions over Trump's immigration poli-

cies and the war in Iran.

Meanwhile, cartel violence in Mexico disrupted one planned host stadium in the months before the tournament began. When a Mexican operation assisted by US intelligence assassinated the drug lord El Mencho in February, chaos erupted in Guadalajara as organized crime groups set fire to public infrastructure and attacked vehicles on the roads. The unrest affected tourism in the area.

No significant safety concerns have emerged about host stadiums or cities in Canada.

• **Enforcement.** Questions have swirled about the role that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), an arm of DHS, could play in the tournament since the agency announced in February that it planned to play a "key part" in World Cup security.

That might concern some participating countries. Germany and the United Kingdom have discouraged US travel due to DHS enforcement, while Ecuador has condemned ICE immigration raids. Meanwhile, Italian officials objected when the United States planned to send ICE to help with enforcement at Milan's Winter Olympics in February amid the agency's aggressive crackdowns in Minnesota. Democratic lawmakers introduced three bills in March aimed at limiting immigration enforcement at the World Cup over safety concerns for attendees and travelers. However, none are expected to pass the Republican-controlled US Congress in time for the tournament's start. The prospect of an ICE presence



Four countries whose teams have qualified for the World Cup fall under Trump's travel ban: Haiti and Iran face full entry bans, while the Ivory Coast and Senegal face partial restrictions. Fans from those countries will be unable to attend World Cup games hosted by the United States unless they are also US residents or dual nationals with countries not on the travel ban list.



Protesters in Washington, the US, demonstrate in December 2025 against the involvement of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel in the 2026 men's World Cup.
● FRANCIS CHUNG/POLITICO



at the World Cup has galvanized some venue workers. On May 29, the union representing 2,000 hospitality workers at Los Angeles' SoFi stadium — which is set to hold eight World Cup matches — broke off negotiations with stadium operators over a contract to improve working conditions and keep ICE out of the venue grounds. SoFi union workers said they would vote on formalizing a strike.

Alden believes ICE does not have a reason to be at the games. "World Cup fans are not likely overstayers, for the most part," he said. "This is a world-stage event, and I don't think that it would make sense to disrupt it with a heavy ICE presence."

• **Player safety.** Concerns about player safety have largely derived from the ongoing Iran war. After initially threatening a "boycott" of the United States games due to security concerns, Iran reached an agreement to move its team's base camp from the US state of Arizona to Tijuana, Mexico, in order to reduce the amount of time the Iranian team spent on US soil. Yet even after FIFA confirmed Iran would cross the border for its US matches, the logistics are coming down to the wire.

Aside from heated sentiments, the actual temperature could be another player-safety issue. Several host cities, such as Los Angeles and Mexico City, are in areas that pose a high risk of heat-stress injury to players. (Other stadiums, such as those in Atlanta and Arlington, Texas, are temperature-controlled.) Last year's Club World Cup in the United States saw midafternoon kickoffs that led to heat exhaustion, raising concerns that players could face similar conditions this year.

Is there a risk of a boycott?

Discussions about boycotting this World Cup have come from soccer coaches, politicians, and civilians, including the heads of 20 European soccer federations — but none ultimately came to fruition. Although many criticize current US policies or the 2026 games, the odds of a boycott that involves countries withholding their teams remains incredibly low, Obadare said. "At the end of the day, [players] want that shot."

Boycotts from individuals or fan groups are more likely. Some people have reportedly sold their tickets, though the Los Angeles Times reported in early February that FIFA stood to gain from these transactions by taking a 15 percent fee from both the sellers and buyers.

Boycotts have certainly swirled around World Cup games before. In 1964, more than a dozen African teams withdrew from the tournament in protest of FIFA's regional qualification policies.

What is FIFA's stance?

FIFA policies include human rights guidelines in line with the United Nations, and require World Cup host countries to do the same.

The 2026 games were the first to have human rights criteria embedded in the bidding process, and each host city published a plan declaring the ways it would promote human rights. Atlanta pledged to raise hourly worker wages for the tournament to

\$17.50, Dallas committed to looking out for human trafficking, and Vancouver outlined a “zero-tolerance” policy for “all acts of discrimination,” among others. Yet Amnesty International issued a report in late March that said there was a “human rights emergency” in the United States, characterized by abusive immigration and border policies, as well as incursions on freedom of speech and assembly. Human Rights Watch said in a report in late April that “all but one” host city committee had either failed to produce the required human rights action plans, or produced plans failing to adequately address human rights risks. FIFA and tournament hosts have come under scrutiny before. At the 2025 Club World Cup, FIFA canceled long-standing antidiscrimination messaging despite instances of fans chanting slurs. During the 2022 Qatar World Cup, protesters were removed from games for speaking out on various issues,

while migrant workers who built infrastructure for the games died because of unsafe working conditions. Worker deaths were also reported in the buildup to prior World Cups hosted by Russia, Brazil, and South Africa. FIFA is unlikely to offend a host nation by speaking out. Obadare noted that the World Cup brings in nearly all of the organization’s income, with the Qatar games in 2022 bringing in 83 percent of FIFA’s revenue from the four-year cycle following the 2018 games. According to Amnesty International, this year’s tournament is expected to be the most lucrative to date, raking in up to \$11 billion.

Are there other geopolitical issues surrounding the games?
Trump has discussed the World Cup’s potential for sports diplomacy, while the State Department’s “Sports Diplomacy Playbook” — seen by Politico — maps out how Washington could lever-



age the event to advance foreign investment and soft policy aims. Trump also expressed interest last year in revoking a ban on Russia playing in the World Cup, which had been implemented after its 2022 attack on Ukraine, though the ban was ultimately upheld. Meanwhile, calls for Israel to be banned over its war in Gaza looked set to be ignored, with the State Department confirm-

ing it would “work to fully stop any effort” to ban Israel. (Israel ultimately did not qualify for the tournament.) On a lighter note, four teams are stepping onto World Cup grass for the first time ever: Cape Verde, Curaçao, Jordan, and Uzbekistan. With those four debutants and the expanded 48-team format, there will likely be several games involving two teams that have



US President Donald Trump (L) is presented with the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize by FIFA President Gianni Infantino during the 2026 FIFA World Cup draw at the Kennedy Center in Washington, the US, on December 5, 2025.

● EVAN VUCCI/AP

never played each other before, providing new arenas to watch for both friendly competition and displays of soft power.

In practical terms, FIFA organizers will be taking notes on the first-ever jointly hosted tournament among the North American neighbors. This year is a test case for the shared hosting model, with the 2030 World Cup set to be split among Morocco, Portugal, and Spain.

Although this year’s hosts have pledged to work together, Canada and Mexico have seen their bilateral ties with the United States change significantly during Trump’s second term. Their disputes over trade, immigration, and other issues could underscore the effect that geopolitics has on the games. Given all the dynamics set to unfold, the World Cup could “be a different tournament” this year, according to Obadare.

The article was first published by the Council on Foreign Relations.

Five flashpoints that could plunge Trump’s World Cup into chaos

By Karla Davies & Lucy Baldwin
Staff at The i Paper

PERSPECTIVE

Donald Trump has taken unprecedented control of the 2026 Fifa World Cup, with a White House task force he personally chairs and centralised planning via the Department of Homeland Security. International fans seeking to cheer on their country on football’s biggest stage have encountered last-minute visa cancellations, fluctuating ticket prices and all-out travel bans as they attempt to embark on increasingly expensive journeys to North America from around the globe. Meanwhile, American citizens living abroad who wish to return for the event say they are afraid to book travel to the US, fearing past comments on social media could lead to them being denied entry. Here are all the main flashpoints that could plunge the US President’s World Cup into chaos, from confusion over border checks to nationwide travel bans.

Border check crackdown

Border checks have been ramping up in recent months, with Britons reporting that they have been subjected to long interviews at US airports. Some have even been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for minor visa violations. Initially, the administration wanted those travelling to the US to reveal five years of their social media history when applying to the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), an automated visa system for US tourism or business. However, following widespread backlash from the tourism industry and fan representative groups like Football Supporters Europe, this policy was abandoned. US officials have warned fans that even with tickets and visas, World Cup entry is not guaranteed. Supporters can be turned away from the border and risk losing thousands of pounds. Last year, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that although having a World Cup ticket can fast-track a US visa under a new scheme, it



Iran’s defender Ehsan Haji Safi (front) and teammates walk on the tarmac after arriving at the Tijuana International Airport in Tijuana, Mexico, on June 7, 2026, ahead of the FIFA 2026 World Cup. All of the matches of the Iranian national football team are set to take place in the US.

● AFP

“doesn’t guarantee your entry to the US”. Fifa boss Gianni Infantino promised the world will be welcomed to the United States for the quadrennial sporting spectacle, co-hosted by Canada and Mexico. But Andrea Florence, executive director of the Sport & Rights Alliance, said that Trump’s “harsh anti-human rights rhetoric, aggressive immigration policies, and mass deportation raids have already cast a dark shadow over the world’s biggest sporting event”.

Last-minute travel cancellations

Some British fans have secured authorisation to travel to the US, only to be left devastated after it was withdrawn at the last minute with no clear explanation. The BBC reported that two brothers from Scotland had their ESTA revoked on June 3 despite it being approved last December, saying they were now not allowed to travel. “I don’t think it’s fair, they shouldn’t authorise somebody to go then take it back,” one of the brothers told the broadcaster. “We didn’t book anything until we were authorised.” Much of the screening process is automated, leaving fans in the

dark about why decisions are made — or how to challenge them.

Fans who are not eligible for the ESTA scheme, including those who have travelled to restricted countries such as North Korea or Iran, may face months-long delays to secure a visa.

Overlapping visa rules are also likely to cause fans some confusion. In January, citizens from 39 countries were issued with travel bans and the Trump administration suspended the processing of immigration visas from 75 countries indefinitely.

Confusion over Iran’s football team

Despite the ongoing conflict between the United States and Iran, the Iranian team and some support staff finally secured permission to enter the US on Friday, just 10 days before their opening fixture of the World Cup against New Zealand on June 15. US officials said the Iranian football team and “necessary support staff” had been granted the visas needed to compete in the tournament, adding that Iran would not be allowed to “abuse this system to sneak terrorists into the United States under false pretences”. But Iranian fans, along with those

from Haiti, are effectively blocked from supporting their teams at matches in the US after their countries were included in the travel ban in January.

Partial bans are also in place for fans from World Cup-qualified countries including Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal, meaning those who do not already have a valid visa will not be granted one until the ban is lifted. Ahead of the World Cup, Trump claimed this summer’s tournament will be “the Greatest and Safest Sporting Event in American history,” adding in a post on Truth Social: “All players, officials, and fans will be treated like the ‘STARS’ that they are!” Those comments now sit uneasily alongside growing concerns over access and travel.

Fans ‘ripped off’ by tickets

Fifa promised the World Cup would be sold out, but there are still thousands of tickets for sale across several platforms. Last week, the attorneys general of New York and New Jersey launched an investigation into Fifa’s ticket practices after allegations of “artificially inflating prices” and “misleading fans”. According to the subpoena, some fans who won tickets in the ballot

in one price category were ultimately given tickets of a lower value, with seats further away from the pitch.

And until last month, fans from 50 countries — including Algeria, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Tunisia, which had qualified for the tournament — faced paying a \$15,000 (£11,000) visa deposit just to be allowed into the US.

The Trump administration waived the fees for World Cup visitors last month, but the last-minute policy change still risks pricing out ordinary supporters and turning the tournament into a luxury event for the wealthy.

Even Trump appeared to balk at the pricing when asked about fans having to pay \$1,000 (£736) to watch the USA’s first Group D match, telling The New York Post last month: “I did not know that number. I would certainly like to be there, but I wouldn’t pay it either, to be honest with you.”

US tourism in decline

All of these concerns are set against the backdrop of a tourism crisis in the US, with four million fewer foreign nationals visiting the country in 2025, compared to 2024.

It marked both the country’s first yearly decline since the Covid-19 pandemic and an even greater fall than was seen after the 2008 financial crash, with total tourism spending estimated to have declined by some \$8 billion (£5.9bn) compared to 2024 levels.

Critics claim that tightened visa restrictions and ICE crackdowns have led more foreigners to avoid visiting the US, even though it is co-hosting the World Cup.

Despite these concerns, the White House said in a statement that the World Cup would be “one of the greatest and most spectacular events in the history of mankind.” The tournament will feature 48 teams and 104 matches, beginning at Mexico City’s Estadio Azteca on June 11 and culminating with the final at the New York/New Jersey MetLife Stadium on July 19.

The article first appeared on The i Paper.



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Iran blames 'political considerations' after US revokes World Cup ticket allocation

Sports Desk

Iran's Football Federation blamed "non-sporting and political considerations" after the United States revoked its allocation of tickets for Team Melli's World Cup group-stage matches, accusing the co-host of obstructing the attendance of Iranian supporters amid a bitter diplomatic row.

"With less than three days remaining until the start of the 2026 World Cup, the United States has once again acted to obstruct the presence of Iranian supporters at the stadiums hosting the national team's three group-stage matches," the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Depriving Iranian fans of access to their legally allocated and officially designated ticket quota runs counter to the spirit of international competitions and the principle of equal treatment among participating nations. The move raises serious questions about the influence of non-sporting and political con-

siderations on the organization of the world's biggest football event.

"Iranian football fans have consistently been among the national team's greatest assets at international tournaments, attending matches while respecting regulations and upholding professional standards. It is therefore expected that their legitimate rights will be respected in the same manner as those of supporters from other countries," the statement added.

The United States has presented several bureaucratic hurdles for Iran at the global football showpiece, including refusing to issue visas to some members of its support staff, as the two countries have effectively remained at war since the attack on Iranian territory on February 28.

The Iranian football body said FIFA regulations entitle participating federations to an allocation of eight percent of tickets for each match, which are distributed to supporters through official channels. According to the statement, FFIRI had already begun ticket sales for group-stage



Iranian fans look on as the national team bus arrives in Tijuana, Mexico, on June 7, 2026.

● VICTOR MEDINA/REUTERS

matches against New Zealand, Belgium and Egypt — all to be played in the United States — after receiving its allocation, with some fans having already made

the necessary travel arrangements. "However, in an unexpected move, the allocation granted to the Iranian Football Federation has been withdrawn, and under

the current circumstances, the federation is unable to provide even a single ticket to supporters of the national team," it said. FFIRI also called on FIFA and

tournament organizers "to uphold the principles of neutrality, fairness and established regulations, and to provide the necessary conditions for Iranian supporters."

Neither FIFA nor the US organizers have publicly commented on the issue. The complaint is the latest dispute surrounding Iran's participation in the World Cup, following visa issues that have prevented around 15 administrative and management staff members in its delegation from entering the United States.

Rising tensions also prompted Iran to move its World Cup training base to the Mexican border city of Tijuana from Tucson, Arizona, as originally planned.

Iran opens its campaign against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15 before facing Belgium in the same city on June 21 and Egypt in Seattle on June 26.

Piazza out to end Iran's slow-start curse as VNL preliminaries open

Sports Desk

Iran will open its Volleyball Nations League campaign with a daunting test against Brazil in Brasilia today in what could be a defining international season for the men's national team and head coach Roberto Piazza. The two sides also met on the opening day of the 2025 edition, with the South American powerhouse emerging victorious in straight sets on home soil.

When the Italian coach was appointed to the role on a 2+2-year contract midway through 2024, he said his ultimate goal was to steer his team to a "constant place among the top eight teams in the world."

His first year in charge offered signs that he was delivering on that objective, as Iran produced a late surge to finish eighth in the 2025 VNL preliminary-round standings, having ended up among the bottom three teams in each of the previous two editions.

Iran, however, ultimately missed out on a first appearance in the VNL Finals in four

years, as China secured the final quarterfinal berth as host nation despite finishing 17th in the preliminary standings. Piazza's men went on to build on that promising campaign by reaching the World Championship quarterfinals later in the year before falling to surprise package Czechia.

Piazza showed determination and commitment to his role when he — unlike many other foreign coaches in Iranian sport — returned to Iran in late May, after concluding his club duties in Italy's top flight, amid the country's fragile ceasefire with the United States and Israel.

As the Italian enters the second year of his contract, which could prove decisive for the future of his tenure, he will be eager to break Iran's habit of slow starts in the VNL preliminary phase, which has proved costly in recent years.

Iran had to wait until its fourth and final outing of Week 1 to claim its first victory at last year's tournament — a five-set win over Ukraine — before going on to win three of its four

matches in Week 2.

In 2024, Iran went winless through its first eight matches across the opening two weeks, and back-to-back victories over the United States and the Netherlands in the final week did little to alter the team's fate as it finished second from bottom of the table.

The situation was not much different in the 2023 campaign. Iran's only Week 1 victory came against relative minnows China, and the team managed just one more win in its remaining preliminary matches to finish above only Bulgaria and China in the standings.

Tricky tests will come thick and fast in Week 1 for Piazza's men, who will take on Bulgaria — last year's World Championship runner-up — on Thursday before facing Argentina and Belgium later in the week at the Nilson Nelson Gymnasium. Iran also faced both Argentina and Bulgaria in the previous edition, beating the South Americans 3-1 before sweeping Bulgaria in straight sets on the final day of the preliminary round.

Iran women rout Lebanon, get off the mark in AVC Nations Cup

Sports Desk

Iran secured its first victory at the AVC Women's Nations Cup in Candon, Philippines, with a comfortable straight-sets win over Lebanon (25-9, 25-8, 25-15) on Tuesday. Outside hitter Fatemeh Khalili led the scoring for Iran with 10 points, while opposite spiker Elaheh Poursaleh added nine.

The victory lifted Iran to fourth in the Pool B standings, although South Korean coach Lee Doh-ee's side still faces a daunting task in its bid to secure a semifinal berth, with two rounds of matches remaining in the preliminary phase.

Fresh from winning the CAVA Championship title last week, Iran opened its campaign with a 3-1 defeat to Indonesia (25-15, 21-25, 25-21, 25-22) on Saturday before surrendering a one-set lead in a 3-1 loss to Kazakhstan (13-25, 25-20, 25-14, 25-19) on Monday.

Kazakhstan, which Iran defeated twice at the CAVA Championship, tops the group standings on three wins, level with second-placed Vietnam, which edged Indonesia in a thrilling five-set encounter



● volleyball.ir

on Monday. Iran will return to action against defending champion Vietnam at the Candon City Arena on Thursday before taking on Hong Kong, China, in its final group-stage match on Friday. The top two teams from each of the two groups will advance to the semifinals.

South Korea and Chinese Taipei occupy the top two spots in Pool A, respectively, having won all three of their matches.

FISU World University Championship Combat Sports:

Iranians win six medals in freestyle wrestling

Sports Desk

Iran enjoyed a strong start to freestyle wrestling competition at the FISU World University Championship Combat Sports in Brasilia, Brazil, collecting three gold medals, two silvers and one bronze across six weight classes on Monday.

Mahdi Veisi delivered Iran's first gold medal in the 57kg category. The Iranian wrestler opened his campaign with a dominant 10-0 victory over his German opponent before defeating a Turkish rival in the second round. Veisi then cruised past a Canadian wrestler by the same scoreline to reach the final, where he once again faced the Turkish competitor and emerged victorious to claim the title.

In the 65kg division, Mohammadreza Hosseini secured Iran's second gold medal. Hosseini defeated opponents from Russia and Moldova en route to the final, where he overcame a wrestler from Turkey to top the podium.

Mohammad-Javad Salehi added a third gold for Iran in the 92kg weight class. After recording victories over wrestlers from Russia and Poland and then defeating a Moldovan opponent in the semi-finals, Salehi beat Canada's representative in the final to seal the championship.

At 125kg, Morteza Janmohammadzadeh advanced to the final with commanding 10-0 wins over wrestlers from Hungary and Mongolia before defeating a Russian opponent in the third round. He was ultimately beaten by a Turkish wrestler in the gold-medal bout and had to settle for silver.

Mohammad-Hossein Norouzi also earned a silver medal in the 86kg category. He defeated opponents from Finland and Spain to reach the final, where he fell to a Turkish rival.

Meanwhile, Mahdi Abbaspour claimed bronze in the 74kg division. Abbaspour beat a German wrestler in his opening match but lost to a Russian opponent in the next round. He bounced back in the bronze-medal contest against a wrestler from Moldova to secure a place on the podium.



● IAWFIR



Head coach Roberto Piazza (L) gives instruction to Iranian national volleyball team players during a training session in Brasilia, Brazil, on June 8, 2026.

● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir

Gomrok Caravanserai reborn as hub for Shiraz handicrafts



● kojara.com

Iranica Desk

To mark World Handicrafts Day, the Gomrok Handicrafts House in Shiraz, the capital of Fars Province, has officially begun operations with the aim of creating a space for production, exhibition, and a direct connection between artisans and the art market.

Located in the historic fabric of Shiraz, the center is housed in the Gomrok Caravanserai, one of the city's largest historical caravan-

serais. According to the deputy head of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, the site had previously been semi-abandoned, with its chambers used mainly as storage areas, IRNA reported. Majid Salimi said the historic building was recently purchased through the efforts of two dedicated handicraft masters and veteran artisans — renowned Khatam Kari (inlay) artist Gholam Fallahpour and Mortaza Salim. He added that the upper floor of

the caravanserai has now entered the restoration process.

Highlighting the important role of the private sector and artists in revitalizing historic buildings and expanding the Zand-era tourism route, Salimi said that, in the first phase, part of the former workshop space was transformed into a handicraft house. Five prominent artists are currently based there, most of whom specialize in Khatam craftsmanship. He added that two specialized

galleries — a Khatam Kari gallery and a gallery dedicated to fine wooden products — have also been established at the complex.

"The ultimate goal is to turn the entire upper floor of Gomrok Caravanserai into an integrated center for the production, training, and promotion of authentic Shirazi handicrafts," Salimi said. He noted that the project would significantly contribute to the tourism development programs of the Cultural Heritage Organi-

zation and Shiraz Municipality in the heart of the UNESCO-listed Zand historical complex.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Director General of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization Behzad Moridi said that a few months earlier, the caravanserai had been nothing more than an abandoned and empty space.

"Today, through the dedication and commitment of officials and artisans, this neglected place has come back to life and has been revitalized," Moridi said.

He expressed hope that soon the sound of artisans' work

the true caretakers of this house," Gholam Fallahpour, a recipient of Iran's First Grade Artistic Certificate in Khatam craftsmanship, is among Shiraz's most recognized artists. His works include highly valued and rare creations, and he has received numerous international awards.

Many credit his dedication and efforts as a key factor in transforming Gomrok Caravanserai into a handicrafts center inside Shiraz's historic bazaar area.

Speaking at the inauguration, Fallahpour said the connection between "authentic art" and "the tourism industry" is essential for



would fill all the chambers and corridors of the beautiful Gomrok Caravanserai.

Moridi described the center as a new step toward strengthening Shiraz's artistic identity and emphasized the need to take the handicrafts economy seriously to ensure the continuation of the city's cultural and artistic heritage.

Addressing handicraft artists, he said, "You are not guests at Gomrok Caravanserai; this place belongs to you, and you will be

the vitality of Shiraz's economy. As the manager of Gomrok Caravanserai, he said the site was once an abandoned and inactive space, but with the involvement of its trustees and the cooperation of artists, it has now become a cultural, artistic, and recreational venue.

"We took the risk and, with passion, brought tourists back to the upper floors of this caravanserai," Fallahpour said. "We proved that art can breathe new life into forgotten spaces."

Yakh Morad Cave facing uncertain future

Iranica Desk

On a road cutting through the heart of the Alborz Mountains, somewhere between the endless bends of the Chalus Road and slopes that sometimes seemed to separate the sky from the earth, a narrow side road branched off toward Kohneh Deh village. The route was quieter than one might have expected for a destination leading to one of Iran's most remarkable limestone caves. Yet this silence was exactly what had surrounded Yakh Morad Cave for decades.

At the end of the short path, after around a 10-minute walk, a rocky entrance emerged from the mountain. It carried no signs of its former glory and offered no promise of the future. The only thing that remained was air rising from deep underground — cold, fresh, and at the same time, a warning. This was Yakh Morad Cave, one of the country's most notable limestone caves, according to chn.ir. From the very beginning of the journey into the cave, the name of Javad Nezamdoost, one of Iran's most experienced cavers and a member of the National Cave Studies Working Group, became closely connected with the story of Yakh Morad. He had spent more than four decades exploring caves and spoke about Yakh Morad with a mixture of experience and concern. Nezamdoost began his account from a point where science and local beliefs became intertwined. He explained that more than 3,000 caves had been identified across Iran, with

more than 25 located in Alborz Province. Yet Yakh Morad had always held a special position. He said that Yakh Morad Cave was part of the cultural memory of the local people. Residents of Kohneh Deh village had long believed that the ice formations inside the cave could fulfill wishes.

However, Nezamdoost emphasized that, contrary to popular belief, the cave was not actually an ice cave. Rather, it was a limestone cave where ice had formed in certain areas due to specific climatic conditions and the penetration of cold air. This distinction was essential to understanding the cave's fragile condition, as any changes in temperature, airflow, and environmental conditions could permanently alter its icy formations.

He explained that during the 1960s, the first and second levels of the cave had been filled during winter and early spring with ice stalactites, ice columns, and even frozen waterfalls. In some sections, several-meter-high ice masses had existed — formations that had now disappeared.

Recalling his first visit to the cave in 1986, Nezamdoost said that at the time, ice formations longer than one meter could be seen in the cave's chambers. In deeper sections, massive ice columns had been large enough for technical climbing. However, over time, everything had changed.

One of the most important factors behind the destruction of the cave, he said, had been the illegal removal of ice forma-



● kojara.com

tions. These actions had often been driven by superstitious beliefs, as people had removed the ice, considering it a form of "Yakh Morad" — a wish-granting ice. Some had even carved into the cave structure in attempts to reach deeper areas.

"These changes had allowed warmer air to enter the inner sections of the cave and had accelerated the melting of thousands-year-old ice formations," Nezamdoost said.

He added that these ancient ice formations could have provided valuable information about Earth's past climate because they functioned as a natural archive. The ice preserved records of climate change, water vapor movements, and even the geological history of the region. Studying these formations could reveal the origins of moisture and the paths it had traveled.

Referring to similar experiences, including Alisadr Cave, Nezamdoost warned that tourism development without scientific planning could destroy natural

cave systems. In some caves, the construction of tourism infrastructure such as stairs and stone pathways had altered natural water and air flows and had even affected underground water systems.

He explained that, fortunately, in recent years the Department of Environment of Alborz Province had conducted comprehensive studies on Yakh Morad Cave with the help of a specialized team. The studies had included complete mapping of the cave and had produced valuable information about its structure. These studies were among the most comprehensive examinations conducted on a cave in Iran, and their findings had been reviewed by the National Cave Studies Working Group.

Regarding new conservation decisions, Nezamdoost said

that experts had classified Yakh Morad Cave into two protection levels. The initial section of the cave had been classified as Level Two, while deeper sections beyond the descent shaft had been categorized as Level One. Level One caves were accessible only to researchers and specialists, and public entry was pro-

hibited. Level Two caves could only be visited with permission and under expert supervision. Experts had also proposed that, in order to restore the cave's natural conditions, access should be completely suspended for 20 to 30 years, allowing the environment to gradually recover. Discussing the current condition of the cave, Nezamdoost said that the first 25 to 30 meters of the cave contained a rocky, slippery path prone to collapse and represented one of the most dangerous sections. Multiple earthquakes in the

region had also contributed to instability around the entrance. After passing this area, visitors reached the main chamber, where the cave's most notable feature was the cool air and the breeze moving from the deeper levels toward the entrance. He also pointed to ongoing efforts to strengthen cave protection nationwide, saying that the National Cave Studies Working Group was working to transform existing regulations into law. If approved by the Parliament, stronger legal tools would become available to protect these national natural treasures.

Nezamdoost stressed that Iran could no longer afford to repeat experiences such as Alisadr Cave and that a scientific and conservation-based approach had to replace purely tourism-oriented views. Only then could these valuable natural heritages be preserved for future generations. Nezamdoost said that the fate of Yakh Morad Cave no longer depended only on nature, but also on human awareness and responsibility. "Although the giant ice formations of this cave have largely disappeared, there is still a possibility of preserving its overall structure — provided that human intervention is minimized and scientific approaches replace uncontrolled tourism and emotional exploitation." What remained of Yakh Morad Cave was a reminder that nature was not an endless and completely renewable resource. Even small changes could silence parts of this natural archive forever.

Portrait of Hormozgan women's attire wins Gold at UAE's Xposure



Arts & Culture Desk

Hormozgan photographer Amir Minabian won a gold medal in the Culture of Nations category at Xposure International Photography Awards 2026 in the United Arab Emirates, marking his third top prize at the globally recognized event after previous victories in 2023 and 2025. Minabian's award-winning image, centered on the traditional attire of women from Iran's southern Hormozgan Province, drew international acclaim for its vivid portrayal of the cultural heritage of the Persian Gulf region. The photograph brought the elegance, authenticity, and enduring traditions

of southern Iran to a global audience, IRNA reported. "In creating this work, I sought to blend storytelling, documentary practice, and aesthetic reflection," Minabian said. "The image remains faithful to its cultural roots while speaking the universal language of contemporary art." He described the photograph as a reflection of the artistry, culture, and aesthetic sensibilities woven into the everyday lives of Hormozgan residents. Held annually in the UAE, Xposure has evolved into one of the world's leading photography platforms, combining exhibitions, competitions, educational programs, and professional networking. The event

regularly attracts internationally renowned photographers, including Pulitzer Prize winners and contributors to National Geographic. Born in Bandar Abbas, Minabian is a photographer, documentary filmmaker, and university lecturer whose career spans more than two decades. His work, known for combining documentary precision with artistic sensitivity, has been exhibited in more than 190 exhibitions and festivals across Iran, Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East. A graduate in graphic design, he has also spent over a decade teaching photography, graphic arts, and handicrafts at universities in Hormozgan Province, helping cultivate a new generation of Iranian artists.

Tehran exhibition explores Europe's postwar artistic legacy

Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art opened 'Nine Artworks by Post-War European Painters,' a new exhibition drawn from its renowned collection that explores how some of Europe's leading artists grappled with the legacy of World War II through painting and sculpture. The exhibition opened on June 8 and runs through June 17 in the museum's main hall. The fourth part of the museum's ongoing 'Art & War' series, the show brings together works by Francis Bacon, Pierre Sou-

lages, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Max Beckmann, Giorgio Morandi, Günther Uecker and Hans Hartung, offering a condensed portrait of a continent seeking renewal after devastation, IRNA reported. Rather than depicting battlefields alone, the selected works trace the psychological and cultural aftershocks of war. "What matters in my work is the identity hidden behind what is called reality," Beckmann once said, reflecting a broader post-war search for meaning beneath the surface of everyday life. Morandi's quiet arrangements of bottles evoke a

world emptied of conflict, while Bacon's wounded and distorted figures stand as enduring images of human fragility. "We are carcasses in potential," Bacon famously remarked, a statement that has become inseparable from interpretations of his post-war oeuvre. The exhibition also highlights Soulages' celebrated exploration of black, or Outrenoir ("Beyond Black"), where darkness becomes a vehicle for light rather than a symbol of despair. Nearby, Hartung's scarlike abstract gestures bear the imprint of a life marked by exile and wartime injury.

Geneva labor forum hears Iran's call for peace, worker protection

Social Desk

Iran's Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Ahmad Meydari called on Asia-Pacific labor ministers on Tuesday to spearhead a global effort to address the human cost of war, proposing that next year's International Labor Organization discussions focus on "war and the workers of the world." Speaking via videoconference at the Asia-Pacific Group (ASPAG) ministerial meeting during the 114th International Labor Conference in Geneva, Meydari said building "a harmonious world with lasting peace and universal welfare" requires deeper cooperation among nations and a collective rejection of conflict. He urged labor leaders to convene a dedicated international gathering that would "condemn war with a clear and powerful voice" and mobilize all available capacities to prevent future conflicts. Framing his remarks through

a historical narrative associated with Cyrus the Great, Meydari said humanity continues to confront a timeless question. "Why war? Why hostility instead of friendship?" he asked, arguing that the challenge remains as relevant today as it was in antiquity. Meydari said workers and farmers, particularly in developing countries, often bear the heaviest burden of wars and geopolitical rivalries. He warned that armed conflicts inflict costs far beyond the battlefield, disrupting livelihoods, destroying communities and undermining social welfare. "The path to prosperity does not run through conflict," he said. "Lasting development is achieved through cooperation, mutual respect and shared interests." The minister pointed to Asia's economic and industrial transformation since World War II as evidence that nations can attain growth and modernization through

partnership rather than domination. The region's progress, he said, has been driven by collaboration and constructive engagement rather than confrontation. Meydari also highlighted the growing role of multilateral groupings such as BRICS, describing them as efforts to promote a more balanced international order grounded in peace, cooperation and mutual benefit. He cited the bloc's vision of creating "a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity." Calling for stronger solidarity among labor ministers, Meydari said fair and open economic relations can expand opportunities for all countries and dispel the notion that one nation's gains must come at another's expense. "Let us choose the path of blessing over exploitation," he said. "Let us come together as ministers of the Asia-Pacific region and ensure this message reaches the world."

TENDER NO.: 08-38-0440056

First Announcement



N.I.S.O.C.
NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) is seeking to procure the specified goods listed in the table below through a Qualitative Evaluation Call for conducting a public tender via the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD). All stages of the tender process including the receipt of tender documents, submission of bidders' proposals, and the opening of bid envelopes, shall be carried out exclusively through the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD) portal at www.setadiran.ir. Bidders who have not previously registered must complete the registration process on the aforementioned portal and obtain an Electronic Signature certificate to participate in the tender.

Item	Material Description	Quantity
1	COILED TUBING REEL STRING, SINGLE TYPE, H2S SERVICE FITTING FIG. 1502 WING WITH INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CORROSION INHIBITOR TEST CERTIFICATE/ANALYSES, WELDING LOCATION AND MATERIAL CERTIFICATE ATTACHED ON EACH REEL SHIPPING SPOOL: STEEL OD SIZE, WALL THICKNESS AS SPECIFIED REF. QUALITY TUBING, GLOBAL TUBING, TENARIS, JASON LONG SIZE: 15000 FT OD. 1.25 IN., W.T.0.095 IN.	12 RL

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 19,149.53 EURO or 31,384,371,324 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS CFR, BANDAR IMAM KHOMEINI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.A.D INCLUDING 25% ADVANCE PAYMENT, SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex,
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 341 23589 Fax No.: 061 34457437

PUBLIC RELATIONS
www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir <http://iets.mporg.ir> www.setadiran.ir 2199598

TENDER NO.: 08-38-0440057

First Announcement



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Item	Material Description	Quantity
01	COILED TUBING REEL STRING, SINGLE TYPE, H2S SERVICE FITTING FIG. 1502 WING WITH INTERNAL/EXTERNAL CORROSION INHIBITOR TEST CERTIFICATE/ANALYSES, WELDING LOCATION AND MATERIAL CERTIFICATE ATTACHED ON EACH REEL SHIPPING SPOOL: STEEL OD SIZE, WALL THICKNESS AS SPECIFIED REF. QUALITY TUBING, GLOBAL TUBING, TENARIS, JASON OD. LONG SIZE: 15000 FT OD. 1.5 IN., W.T.0.109 IN.	6 RL
02	LONG SIZE: 22000 FT OD. 1.5 IN., W.T.0.109 IN.	4 RL

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 20,283.91 EURO or 33,243,526,158 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

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