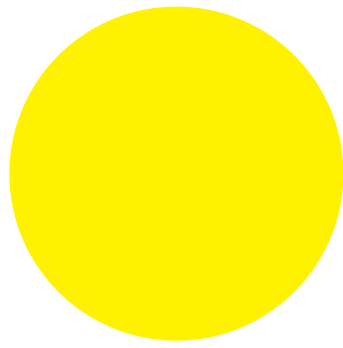


TPO cites 26 official crossings to offset maritime curbs



3 >



Iran Daily

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irandaily.ir

newspaper.irandaily.ir

IranDailyWeb

Armed Forces respond to US assault with missiles, drones

2 >



OPINION

Persian Gulf countries doubt America's security umbrella

4 >



Iran threatens to suspend World Cup matches over unofficial flags, political chants

6 >



Mashhad-e Kaveh emerges as potential world heritage candidate

7 >

Pezeshkian calls for shifting away from 'no war, no peace' stalemate

FM spokesperson: US harming diplomacy with ceasefire breaches

2 >



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian delivers a speech at a memorial for martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran on June 10, 2026. [president.ir](#)

US venting its frustration with Iran through football

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

The United States, as host of the 2026 World Cup, has adopted discriminatory measures against certain countries, including Iran, which has encountered visa delays and ticketing restrictions. In an interview with Iran Daily, football veteran Mirshad Majedi argued that such actions stem from fear.



Mirshad Majedi

He said Washington understands the significance of football in Iran and having failed to achieve its broader objectives against Iran during the war, it is now taking out its frustrations on the football field. Majedi stressed, however, that despite these obstacles, Iran's national team remains fully capable of producing its best performance.

IRAN DAILY: Has similar behavior national teams and fans ever occurred at previous World Cups or major sporting events?

MAJEDI: There is no precedent for this kind of treatment at any World Cup—whether in football, futsal, beach soccer, men's competitions, women's competitions—or even at the Olympics. I believe had this aggressive war not been launched by the US against Iran, such levels of fear and anxiety would not have emerged. These measures stem from fear. Such conduct runs contrary to the Olympic Charter, FIFA's Code of Ethics, and the provisions set out in FIFA's contracts, directives, disciplinary regulations, security protocols, and safeguarding guidelines. When dogs are brought in to sniff players from Senegal, Uzbekistan, or other countries, or when Iranian personnel are subjected to this kind of visa process – while it remains unclear what treatment Iranian players might face upon arrival at airports – this reflects fear and insecurity. FIFA should tear up all of its guidelines and regulations if they are not going to be applied equally. What this demonstrates is that these rules and executive regulations are enforced only against developing countries, while the same standards are not applied to the United States or countries with comparable influence.

Are such actions befitting of a

host country and are they not contrary to the spirit of sport? They are unquestionably at odds with sporting regulations, the spirit of sport, and the principle of fair play.

It is like inviting a guest into one's home and, instead of offering hospitality, bringing them in under an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. All of these actions are being taken by the United States out of fear.

In this context, FIFA and the International Olympic Committee should seriously reconsider future events hosted by the United States. Even the upcoming Los Angeles Olympics should be carefully reviewed, and if possible, it should not be held there at all, because these actions undermine human dignity and respect.

What consequences could these measures have for the United States' credibility and image as host of the world's biggest football tournament?

I believe that America's aura of dominance has been broken. Public perceptions of the United States have changed, and these actions are likely to achieve little beyond fueling hostility toward the country and intensifying criticism regarding racism.

FIFA has reportedly warned that players who cover their mouths while speaking during matches could face ethical or disciplinary consequences, but rather than focusing on such matters, efforts should be directed toward confronting racist attitudes in the United States. America is merely the host country, and FIFA regulations contain no provisions granting hosts special authority. Hosts are expected to comply with FIFA rules, not operate above them. It is regrettable that FIFA's president and his colleagues have disregarded established principles and are acting in service of Donald Trump.

What impact will this issue have on FIFA's efforts to keep sporting competitions separate from political disputes?

Anyone who still believes football is separate from politics, or that politics has no place in football, understands very little about the game. Football is deeply political. This has been evident since the era of João Havelange, continued under Sepp Blatter, and remains true under Gianni Infantino. Everything is political. Those with greater power are able to shape the rules and even rewrite them.

When Trump failed to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, FIFA went on to create what is described as an unofficial award and presented him with a FIFA Peace Prize. This demonstrates that politics has fully, demonstrably, and undeniably entered FIFA. From this point forward, football can be viewed as a political instrument.

What impact could this have on FIFA's future policies? Might FIFA seek stricter guarantees from future host nations?

FIFA's approach depends heavily on who the host is. Its flexibility has reached a point where rules and regulations can be interpreted in whatever manner it chooses. Imagine if the host country were Qatar, Saudi Arabia, or Iran instead of the United States. Would FIFA have tolerated this kind of visa policy? Certainly not. It would have taken a firm stance, immediately referring to specific articles, clauses, and ethical provisions in case of objection. If another major event is awarded to the United States, the same situation is likely to repeat itself. Yet when events are hosted outside the United States and by countries with less influence, every rule will be rigorously enforced against them.

From a technical standpoint, how could these developments affect the performance of Iran's national team?

All technical and tactical plans can be fully realized only when coaches, players, technical staff, and everyone involved are operating in a calm and stable environment. The effects of these issues inevitably show up on the pitch.

A team whose mental and emotional balance has been disrupted will find that no tactical system can fully compensate for that. The United States understands the role football plays in different countries. Having failed to achieve its broader objectives toward Iran and having suffered setbacks both internationally and domestically, it is now venting its frustration through football.

Yet, this discriminatory treatment does not mean Iran's national team is incapable of producing its best performance. The team must not become distracted by off-field controversies. Iranians are a resilient people and the team must prove itself despite all these injustices. A strong victory over New Zealand would leave qualification for the next round almost assured. Therefore, the players should set aside all of these imposed difficulties and claim their due on the field.

Pezeshkian calls for shifting away from 'no war, no peace' stalemate

FM spokesperson: US harming diplomacy with ceasefire breaches

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday that Iran "must move" beyond the current "no war, no peace" situation, stressing that war is not in the country's interest.

Pezeshkian made the remarks during a memorial ceremony for martyred leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei as peace talks between Iran and the United States have reached an impasse due to the US excessive demands and its violations of a ceasefire agreement brokered by Pakistan.

"We must get out of this 'no war, no peace' situation. War is definitely not in the country's interest, but that doesn't mean that if they want to violate our dignity, our soil and our land, we will surrender or back down."

The president said managing the country during war and crises was "difficult" and stressed the need for unity and cooperation among all parts of society to overcome challenges facing Iran.

"We must move forward with dignity in

a way that saves the future of our country from crises and storms," he said.

His remarks came as regional countries including Pakistan and Qatar are still making efforts 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.

According to ISNA, a Qatari delegation also arrived in Tehran on Wednesday to address remaining differences between the US and Iran.

"Following consultations with the US, Qatari negotiators travelled to Tehran this morning to meet with the Iranians in an effort to bridge the remaining gaps," a diplomat with knowledge of the situation said on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive talks told AFP.

The diplomatic effort came after Iran and the US on Wednesday exchanged fire following the downing of an American helicopter over the Gulf of Oman, further straining a ceasefire that took effect in April 8.

The tit-for-tat attacks were the most



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian delivers a speech at a memorial for martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran on June 10, 2026.

● [president.ir](#)

severe escalation since the ceasefire was established. Since then, the US have repeatedly launched attacks on Iran in breach of the truce.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said on Wednesday that US strikes jeopardized ongoing negotiations. He accused the US of undermining diplomacy with its attacks and contradictory messages. He said that Israel was also harming the diplomatic process by continuing to violate the ceasefire in Lebanon.

"Following overnight events, we need to reassess ... Any diplomatic process requires a minimum stable environment," Baqaei said.

US President Donald Trump accused Iran on Wednesday of taking too long to negotiate a peace deal and warned it



would "have to pay the price."

"Iran is all talk and no action," he said on Wednesday. "They've taken too long to negotiate a deal that would have been great for them, now they will have to pay the price!!!"

Separately, Trump told a Fox News journalist that because peace talks had

stalled, he was getting closer to targeting Iran's power plants and bridges.

In response, Iranian Armed Forces spokesman Abolfazl Shekarchi said Iran has proven it can respond decisively to US threats. Shekarchi said Tehran has responded to all of Trump's threats and would "not back down."

Armed Forces respond to US assault with missiles, drones

International Desk

Iran's Armed Forces launched new attacks on US bases and assets in the region in response to the US strikes on southern parts of Iran as renewed exchange of fire prompted the head of the United Nations to caution against a return to all-out war.

According to Iran's Foreign Ministry, the escalation began in the early morning hours of Wednesday when the US carried out "savage attacks" on areas in southern Iran under the pretext that one of its Apache helicopters had targeted by Iran over the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday night.

The ministry's statement slammed the attacks as a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, saying that, "With these aggressive actions, the US ruling administration once again demonstrated its criminal and warmongering nature." In response to the military aggression and the violation



● [IRAN'S ARMY](#)

of Iran's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, the country's "powerful armed forces" struck US bases and assets in the region that were the origin of these aggressions, the ministry said.

The Foreign Ministry also reminded all countries in the region — particularly those on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf — of their "legal and moral responsibility" to prevent the US and Israeli military from using their territory and facilities to design, organize, execute, or support aggressive actions against

Iran. "The Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate in exercising its inherent right to self-defense, including by targeting the origin of attacks as well as bases and logistics facilities used to execute and support aggressive operations against Iran," the ministry warned. According to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), the US military attacked several locations in Jask, Sirik, and Qeshm in the southern province of Hormozgan earlier in the day under the "false pretext" of an American helicopter's crash.

The American strikes had damaged a telecommunications tower in Sirik and destroyed two water reservoirs in the Bemani district of the county, the IRGC added.

The IRGC said its Navy responded to the attacks by carrying out a retaliatory drone strike against the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. The force later announced that it had also launched a missile strike against Washington's al-Azraq base in Jordan. An informed military source, meanwhile, said Iran used long-range solid-fuel Kheibar Shekan missiles to target the shelters housing the warplanes.

The IRGC added that, in total, 21 targets at American air and naval bases across the region were hit throughout the reprisal.

Additionally, the Iranian Army's said it launched waves of drone operations against American bases and the radar systems of the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain.

Tehran slams UNSC nuclear meet as 'another display of hypocrisy'

International Desk

Iran's mission to the United Nations dismissed a Security Council meeting convened on the country's nuclear program as "another display of hypocrisy," stressing that there is no legal basis for invoking an expired resolution to target Tehran with sanctions.

The council met on Tuesday under an agenda item concerning the 1737 Committee, a sanctions body established in 2006, after a procedural vote that passed 11-2 with two abstentions. Russia and China voted against convening the meeting, while Pakistan and Somalia abstained.

A number of Security Council members, at the behest of the United States, repeated baseless claims against Iran's peaceful nuclear program and repeated the disinformation campaign of the United States and the Israeli regime like a "parrot," Iran's mission said in a statement. "Another show of hypocrisy and double standards at the UN Security Council meeting," the mission said.

The meeting ended without any result, and no representative of the UN Secretary-General submitted a report.

Tehran's mission underlined that there is no legal basis for the so-called 1737 Committee, no remaining Security Council sanctions resolution against Iran, and no justification for holding meetings under the "non-proliferation" agenda item.

UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal known as



The United Nations Security Council meets on the Middle East at UN Headquarters in New York, on June 10, 2026.

● [AFP](#)

the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), expired on October 18, 2025, terminating the effect of previously imposed resolutions against Iran, Tehran said.

"This is a blatant abuse of the Security Council's authority and a deliberate attempt to mislead the international community," the mission said.

The mission reaffirmed Iran's commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), stating that for over five decades, it has remained a responsible state party and has never sought nuclear weapons.

"The real threat to the non-proliferation regime is the impunity of those who attack peaceful nuclear facilities under safeguards while claiming to uphold international law and non-proliferation," it noted.

Iran vows to protect own rights against 'flawed' IAEA resolution

International Desk

Iran's mission to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna said the Islamic Republic will protect its inalienable rights in response to a "flawed" resolution passed by the UN nuclear agency's 35-nation Board of Governors.

The resolution, submitted by the United States, Britain, France and Germany, was adopted with 21 votes in favor, three against (Russia, China and Niger) and 10 abstentions. Venezuela was reportedly not allowed to participate.

"Today, the Board of Governors adopted, with a shaky vote, another political resolution on Iran's peaceful nuclear activities, devoid of the professionalism expected from a technical body," the Iranian mission said in a statement.

It questioned how the IAEA can be trusted when it is "instrumentalized by

warmongers" and rendered incapable of even expressing concern over the "most extensive unlawful armed attacks, unprecedented in its history, on peaceful safeguarded nuclear facilities of a member state."

The statement noted that the resolution hypocritically supports a diplomatic solution while the US simultaneously engages in further acts of aggression against Iranian civilian infrastructure and promotes confrontation in other forums.

"A diplomatic solution needs a minimum of good faith."

In a joint statement delivered during the board meeting, Iran, China and Russia said issues related to the implementation of Iran's safeguards agreement are not connected to current conditions, given that the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 expired on October 18, 2025.

The three countries condemned repeat-

ed attacks on Iran's safeguarded nuclear facilities and threats to continue military action, warning that such measures weaken the non-proliferation regime and have created an unprecedented situation in the agency's history.

They described the draft resolution as political, unconstructive and inappropriate under the current sensitive circumstances, warning that its adoption could weaken cooperation between Iran and the IAEA and damage ongoing diplomatic efforts.

The resolution comes after two unprovoked US-Israeli wars of aggression against Iran, in June 2025 and February 2026, that directly targeted IAEA-monitored nuclear sites, including Natanz, Fordow, Isfahan and the Arak heavy water reactor.

Iran has repeatedly condemned the IAEA for its "dangerous and deliberate silence" over those attacks.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



TPO cites 26 official crossings to offset maritime curbs

Economy Desk

The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said on Wednesday that the country has alternative trade routes through 26 official crossings and its Eurasian economic ties that can offset growing maritime restrictions, though costs will rise.

Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi told reporters that while sea routes benefit from lower transport costs, they are not the only option available, and that in the event of restrictions, Iran can use 26 official land crossings to conduct trade, Mehr news agency reported.

"Obviously, using alternative routes will increase transport costs and may lengthen transit times, and some infrastructure will need to be developed," Dehnavi said. "But that does not mean trade routes are closed. With the efforts of various bodies, meeting the country's

import and export needs will continue."

"Cooperation frameworks were already in place, and thanks to agreements and growing convergence – including Iran's observer status in the union – greater reliance on these capacities is possible," he added. "Part of the needs previously met through the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman are now being supplied via these routes."

Iran's southern ports remain under a US naval blockade, which President Donald Trump imposed in mid-April, aiming to pressure Tehran into a peace agreement after a 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February. Iran is seeking to diversify its logistics corridors to counter growing restrictions on its trade routes.

Asked what plans Iran has if conditions worsen and restrictions tighten, he said higher transport costs would be un-

avoidable, and that for some export goods, economic viability had already decreased on certain routes. However, he said, given the diversity of available routes and opportunities, the country's trade would not come to a halt, though higher costs are a significant reality that must be accepted.

UAE trade ties revivable

"If conditions improve and agreements are reached, it will be possible to resume and strengthen trade cooperation with countries like the UAE," he said. "Trade is always a win-win game where both sides benefit. With the restoration of peace, damaged relationships can also be revived and developed."

Iran is redirecting cargo and logistics operations to ports in Pakistan, India and Oman after activities at the United Arab Emirates' Jebel Ali port stopped amid wartime conditions.



IRNA

Gilan Province signs deal to roll out electric vehicles in six months

Economy Desk

Iran's northern Gilan Province signed a memorandum of understanding on Tuesday to begin producing electric vehicles within the next six months, IRNA reported, during the opening day of the 13th Specialized Automobile Exhibition in the provincial capital of Rasht. The agreement was signed between the province's industrial parks organization and an electric vehicle manufacturing company. Under the memorandum, electric vehicle production is scheduled to begin in Gilan within six months.

The 13th Specialized Automobile Exhibition of Gilan opened on Tuesday at the Rasht International Exhibition Center in the presence of Governor Hadi Haghsheenas.

Speaking to reporters during the opening ceremony, Haghsheenas pointed to the country's challenges in the energy and transportation sectors. The exhibition was held with the participation of eight car import companies from the Anzali Free Zone, showcasing imported vehicles with national license plates, free zone plates, and temporary transit permits.

"The use of modern vehicles could help reduce some of these problems, adding that the greater the use of newer and safer vehicles in the country's transportation fleet,



The photo shows a vehicle displayed at the 13th Gilan Specialized Automobile Exhibition, which opened on June 9, 2026 in Rasht, Gilan.

IRNA

the lower the air pollution, the fewer the losses caused by traffic accidents, and the better fuel consumption could be managed," Haghsheenas said. "The governor described the Anzali Free Zone as one of Gilan's key capacities in the automotive sector and said agreements reached between Gilan and the country's northern and northwestern provinces, along with cooperation from the traffic police, had created conditions for increased demand for modern, fuel-efficient foreign vehicles."

Stressing that moving toward clean transportation was essen-

tial, he said the use of electric and low-consumption vehicles, in addition to reducing dependence on fossil fuels, would help preserve Gilan's air quality.

In October 2025, Iran's second-largest carmaker introduced the country's first domestically developed Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV), as part of broader efforts to align with global trends in automotive electrification. Separately, the country's largest automaker had already unveiled a Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV), which it says is in the late stages of development or pre-production.

South Pars Phase 11 boosts output to 24 mcm/day, eyes higher capacity

Economy Desk

Cumulative production of rich gas from Phase 11 of Iran's South Pars field has reached 16.6 billion cubic meters, an energy volume equivalent to roughly 100 million barrels of crude oil, the project's development manager said on Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters, Keyvan Tariqati, the project manager for Phase 11 development, said daily output from the phase currently stands at about 24 million cubic meters, adding that this level of production has played a key role in meeting domestic energy demand, increasing recovery from the shared South Pars field, and safeguarding national interests.

The 11th well of the phase is on the verge of coming online. South Pars, shared with Qatar, is responsible for 70% of Iran's natural gas supply and 40% of the feedstock needed in the country's gasoline production sector. It covers 40 offshore drilling rigs, hundreds of wells, and thousands of kilometers of underwater pipelines across 28 development phases.

"Concurrent with the ongoing development program of



this phase, initial flow testing and acidizing of the 11th well on the SPD11B platform have been successfully completed," Tariqati said. "After connecting to the platform, this well will gradually add approximately 2.3 to 2.5 million cubic meters per day of rich gas – natural gas with high hydrocarbon content – to Phase 11's production capacity, raising the platform's daily output to about 26 million cubic meters of rich gas."

Phase 11 is the final development project among the 24 phases of the shared South Pars field with Qatar and was awarded under Iran's new IPC model to Petropars.

South Pars, the world's largest gas field, is responsible for 70% of Iran's natural gas

supply and 40% of the feedstock needed in the country's gasoline production sector. It covers 40 offshore drilling rigs, hundreds of wells, and thousands of kilometers of underwater pipelines across the development phases.

Development of this cross-border phase has accelerated since the start of the current government, with daily gas production rising from roughly 12 million cubic meters on August 21, 2024, to more than 24 million cubic meters in January 2025 – a growth of over 100%.

With the 11th well coming on stream, daily output from the SPD11B platform is set to increase further to approximately 26 million cubic meters of rich gas.

North Khorasan debuts pilot cotton farm as model farms expand



IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran unveiled its first cotton pilot farming pattern project in North Khorasan Province on Wednesday, aiming to promote scientific cultivation and improve

productivity, a deputy agriculture minister said at the launch ceremony.

Speaking at the event in Maneh County, Gholamreza Golmohammadi, who heads the Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization, said 2,000 mod-

el farms have so far been established for six agricultural products across the country to boost efficiency, promote modern methods and raise production. The ceremony marked the unveiling of the first cotton pattern farm, alongside the launch of 30 similar cotton pilot farms across the northeastern province, according to ISNA.

These model farms have been established with the aim of transferring technical knowledge, expert experience, and introducing modern methods of planting, maintaining, and harvesting cotton, in order to improve yields and enhance production quality on farms across the province and other regions of the country, the report added.

According to ISNA, as many as 7,184 hectares of cotton were cultivated in

North Khorasan Province over the past year. Small landholding sizes remain an obstacle to mechanized planting and harvesting of cotton in the province.

To use mechanized agricultural equipment for cotton harvesting, planting must also be carried out mechanically, but most cotton cultivation in the province is still done using traditional methods, it said.

"In the current cropping year, training and extension for farmers has been prioritized, which will lead to increased productivity in the agricultural sector," Golmohammadi said.

The six products covered by the model farm program are wheat, barley, corn, rapeseed, cotton and rice, he said. "A total of 40,000 farmers across the country will be connected to expert and leading

farmers so they can share their findings and experiences."

"Leading farmers will be supported so they can implement their achievements on farms with lower average yields as well," Golmohammadi added.

Given water shortages and rising costs, he said, "We must seriously increase production per unit area and productivity." The deputy minister stressed the need to bring research findings into the field. "Research projects must enter farms. Farmers must seek new findings and up-to-date knowledge, because traditional farming no longer meets needs."

"Given the significant decline in water resources, we must adopt appropriate solutions to increase productivity under water-scarce and drought conditions," he said.

Persian Gulf countries doubt America's security umbrella

By Hossein Mohammadnia
Expert on international affairs

OPINION

For years, it was assumed that the security of countries along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf was guaranteed through arms contracts and the presence of US military bases. However, the recent war with Iran demonstrated that this umbrella holds little credibility. Despite Riyadh and Abu Dhabi repeatedly expressing concerns, Washington launched its attack against Iran without coordinating with them. A report from the Stimson Institute indicates that the war has caused \$200 billion in damages to the economies of Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries. More than 80 energy facilities in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman have been targeted in retaliatory attacks, with reconstruction costs estimated at \$58 billion.

The UAE, which for years was a strategic ally of Washington, is now seeking cooperation with the Zionist regime, China, and Russia. Saudi Arabia, too, has embarked on a new path through Mohammed bin Salman's visit to Moscow and his talks with certain regional countries. Qatar and Oman have also always smartly maintained their distance from the United States. This diversification of partners represents a clear sign of the end of America's unipolar dominance in the region's security architecture.

Iran; a powerful and undeniable neighbor

In this strategic rearrangement, Iran has emerged as an ineradicable actor. Persian Gulf countries have come to realize that the Strait of Hormuz, energy pipelines, and the region's skies are all directly influenced by Iran's military and geographical power. Attempts to eliminate or weaken Iran not only fail to lead to sustainable peace but also entail staggering costs.

These costs are now clearly observable. The International Monetary Fund has projected severely negative economic growth for regional countries in 2026: Qatar at -14.7 percent, Kuwait at -4.2 percent, Bahrain at -3.8 percent, the UAE at -1.9 percent, and Saudi Arabia at -1.4 percent. These figures are released at a time when, prior to the war, these countries were pursuing ambitious long-term development programs.

A report from the Atlantic Council think tank in mid-May 2026 warns that the illusion of "middle powers" status should not deceive countries. Neither does Europe have the capacity to replace America, nor has China shown any inclination to accept the role of regional security guarantor; therefore, the only remaining path is de-escalation with Iran and the establishment of a regional mechanism for managing differences.

A recent report from The Guardian also reveals that even during the talks between Chinese and American leaders in Beijing, the issue of Iran and the Strait of Hormuz was raised as one of



The AI-generated image shows Mohammed bin Salman, the Crown Prince of the Saudi Arabia, severing a rope that used to connect his country's grand economic projects to the United States' security guarantees.
● ARIANA NEWS AGENCY

the three main axes of discussion. This means that the world has concluded that, by excluding Iran, the lock on energy security and regional stability will not be opened.

China and Russia: complementary partners, not definitive replacements

In recent years, Persian Gulf countries have also expanded their relations with the East. China, as the region's largest oil importer, constitutes a vital trade partner for these countries. Russia, too, has consolidated its position in the region through the sale of missile defense systems and cooperation in the energy market. However, neither of these two powers possesses the inclination or capacity

to completely replace America's security umbrella.

Analysis from the Atlantic Council indicates that even at the height of the Ukraine war and the West Asian crisis, China has maintained a cautious and non-interventionist posture. Beijing has consistently avoided accepting direct responsibility for other countries' security and has preferred to define its relations on the basis of economics and trade. Russia, on the other hand, is entangled in a war of attrition in Europe and has focused its efforts on halting NATO's advance. Therefore, rather than making a unilateral choice, regional countries have adopted a risk-hedging strategy. They negotiate with the United States, trade with China, import weapons from Russia, and hold confidential talks with Iran — all simultaneously. This multi-layered approach represents a realistic response to a world in which there is no longer a reliable, stability-providing hegemon.

A Guardian report also notes that China cannot and does not

wish to play America's role in guaranteeing its allies' security. The experience of the Taiwan crisis and China's pressures on South Korea and Japan have demonstrated that Beijing, in sensitive moments, uses economic levers to exert pressure rather than to create stability. This is precisely the behavior that Persian Gulf countries have also well understood.

'Self-provided security' on the distant horizon

The ultimate outcome of these developments is the gradual transition from the model of "renting security from America" to the model of "producing security from within the region". Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries have now realized that the heavy costs of war and sanctions, along with growing distrust of Western partners, compel them to invest in domestic capabilities and regional cooperation.

A report from Germany's SWP institute cites the UAE's efforts to establish independent logistics

corridors in Africa and its cooperation with the Zionist regime in Somalia as an example of this endeavor to achieve strategic depth without reliance on the West. The UAE's exit from OPEC is also assessed within this framework — an action to gain greater control over its own resources and oil policies. Although these developments, by no means, signify a complete severance of relations with the United States, they indicate that unilateral and unconditional dependence no longer exists. Saudi Arabia, which was once America's closest ally in the region, has now elevated its relations with China to the level of strategic partnership and coordinates with Russia within OPEC+. Qatar, too, has always utilized its diplomatic capacities to play a mediating role between Iran and the West.

In the new security architecture of the Persian Gulf, Iran is a neighbor with whom one must engage. China is a partner from whom one must benefit. Russia is a supplier whom one must manage. America is a traditional ally upon whose stability and commitment one can no longer rely. This multi-layered and volatile order, although more complex and costly than the era of American hegemony, possesses at least one undeniable advantage: this new order is based on reality, not illusion. Regional countries have finally understood that no extra-regional power will guarantee their security freely and permanently.

The article was first published by the Strategic Council for Foreign Relations.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (front-L) meets with his Saudi counterpart, Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on December 14, 2025, to co-host the fifth meeting of the Political Sub-committee of the China-Saudi Arabia High-level Joint Committee.
● PRC MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Therefore, rather than making a unilateral choice, regional countries have adopted a risk-hedging strategy. They negotiate with the United States, trade with China, import weapons from Russia, and hold confidential talks with Iran — all simultaneously. This multi-layered approach represents a realistic response to a world in which there is no longer a reliable, stability-providing hegemon.

How Iran war benefits China's global ambitions



By Ryan Hass
Director of John L.
Thornton China Center

OPINION

The United States and Israel fought Iran, and China won. America's setback with Iran has widened a lane for China to assert greater influence and leadership on the world stage. The conflict has ratified Beijing's judgment that it need not confront Washington in a climactic showdown for global leadership. Instead, China's leaders can afford to steadily accrue power and influence while Washington flounders. The more America depletes itself dealing with Iran and deepening its own political divisions at home, so the thinking in Beijing goes, the quicker China will arrive at the center of the world stage.

China's ascent is not what America's architects and advocates for striking Iran had in mind. Rather, they argued that America would emerge from victory over Iran stronger while China would be weakened. In this telling, if Iran's government fell, then China's anti-West coalition of partners would be diminished. China would lose access to discounted Iranian oil, which accounted for roughly 13% of its overall oil imports. More intangibly, China would be exposed as a bystander, stuck reacting to US President Donald Trump's bold gambits rather than a shaper of global events itself.

Events of the past several months have disproven such blinkered assumptions. To the contrary, as Robert Kagan has argued, Iran will emerge stronger and more influential from the conflict. This is because Tehran will enjoy leverage over every major economy in the world through its control of the Strait of Hormuz.

China also will gain on a relative basis from America's setback against Iran. Beijing sees the United States wearing itself down while China preserves its strength and keeps its resources concentrated on what it views as the defining geopolitical contest: the battle for technological leadership. For China, hegemony in the Persian Gulf region would carry more burdens than benefits. China is content to remain a friend to all and an enemy to none without having to assume the burdens of becoming a security guarantor in the region.

To be clear, not all aspects of the Iran war will redound to China's benefit. Disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, higher energy prices, and a broader global economic downturn would impose real costs on China's economy. Yet, on balance, the strategic ledger tilts in Beijing's favor. The conflict has opened opportunities for China to strengthen its economic centrality and displace America as a provider of public goods to countries in need.

China's accrual of influence

Already, Beijing is assisting American allies such as Thailand and the Philippines in meeting shortfalls for jet fuel and other energy imports. By coming to the aid of countries in crisis, China is filling a role that America long had used to its own advantage. Longer term, Beijing will profit from the war-induced demand destruction for oil. China is in pole position to cement global market share for the renewable energy technologies it dominates, such as solar, wind, electric vehicles, and batteries.

Beijing also will take relief from the toll the Iran war has taken on America's relationships with its allies, particularly in Europe and the Middle East. The open divergences between Washington and its partners over the war's legitimacy, execution, and fallout have



exposed fissures that risk metastasizing to other issue areas over time.

For China, these fissures offer comfort. Beijing has long viewed America's alliance network as a risk point for its rise. Any weakening of alliance cohesion reduces the possibility of coordinated pushback on Chinese advances, whether in Asia, technological competition, or global governance.

China also will relish the visible reminder of America's difficulties in securing strategic objectives in Iran. Chinese officials will ask their counterparts across Asia, foremost in Taiwan: If America cannot handle a second-rate regional military power like Iran, do you really think the United States will risk war with China to come to your defense? China also will seek to build a narrative contrast between itself as

people to accept that their best bet for security and prosperity is to integrate with the mainland.

China's strategy for Taiwan relies upon creating a sense of inevitability. To foster this feeling, China's propaganda efforts in Taiwan will dial up narratives about a worn-out America lacking the appetite for a struggle with China. Chinese officials will urge Taiwan's leaders to adjust to America's decline by becoming more positive about cross-strait collaboration. At the same time, Beijing will continue its massive military buildup to ensure options if its project of persuasion fails.

Restoring discipline

As troubling as the trendlines for American global leadership feel in the current moment, it is essential that Ameri-

enges. Among the myriad challenges, China's leaders confront record youth unemployment, sagging domestic demand, and mounting debt. None of this is intended to whitewash America's own challenges, which are profound, but rather to observe that China will need to cross many hurdles of its own in the years ahead. The future does not belong to China any more than it does to America. Global leadership will be contested.

If America is serious about contesting China's vision of global leadership, it will need to rediscover strategic discipline, reinvest in alliances, and concentrate on technological advancement as the principal measure of national power.

Strategic discipline will require a combination of process and prioritization. It will not be achievable so long as America's foreign policy remains an extension of Trump's whims. Trump is the most manipulable and incurious president of the modern era. Discipline only will return if senior advisors muster courage to insist on conducting a policy process that rigorously examines options and weighs second- and third-order effects before presenting choices for presidential decision. Congress also will need to claw back its constitutional prerogative to exercise oversight of foreign policy. The House of Representatives' June passage of a resolution to limit US military involvement in hostilities with Iran was a positive initial step, but much more oversight will be needed to fulfill the role the Founding Fathers envisioned for Congress as the Article I branch of the US government. If the current cohort of congressional leaders is uncomfortable performing their duties, they should get out of the way for others to step forward. And if this proves infeasible, then candidates to succeed Trump in 2028 should be measured in part by their discipline and capacity to correct for Trump's erraticism.

Overall, the Iran war has exposed the limits of American power, sharpened divisions between America and its allies, and created an opening for China to assume a more central role in the international order. Whether these Chinese gains become permanent or prove illusory will depend in no small measure on whether America learns lessons and regains discipline, or whether it doubles down on dysfunction.

The article was first published by the Brookings Institution.



A television shows the meeting between Kuomintang Chairwoman Cheng Li-wun (L), the leader of Taiwan's main opposition party, and Xi Jinping, the Chinese leader, in Beijing, China, on April 10, 2026.

● I-HWA CHENG/APP

a reliable steward of the international order versus America as a violent and reckless pursuer of its own interests.

Psychological risks for Taiwan

Partly for these reasons, Beijing is unlikely to alter its approach toward Taiwan as a result of the Iran war. Any arguments that China may quickly strike Taiwan during a moment of American distraction rest on a superficial understanding of China's strategic thinking. Beijing's aim is to compel the Taiwan

can policymakers maintain composure. The United States has a greater margin for error in its foreign policy than any other power, particularly given its energy abundance, deep and liquid capital markets, unique technological ecosystem, dollar dominance, and its democratic institutions, which enable course correction. America has rebounded from dire setbacks before, notably Vietnam. The American people also have shown resilience in healing political wounds throughout their history.

By a similar measure, it would be a failure of imagination to project China's strategic moment into an indefinite future. Sparkling news headlines about China's dominance of emerging technologies, such as solar and electric vehicles, obscure the fact that the country remains beset with economic chal-



For China, these fissures offer comfort. Beijing has long viewed America's alliance network as a risk point for its rise. Any weakening of alliance cohesion reduces the possibility of coordinated pushback on Chinese advances, whether in Asia, technological competition, or global governance.

Iran threatens to suspend World Cup matches over unofficial flags, political chants

Sports Desk

Iran will halt matches at the upcoming FIFA World Cup and may refuse to continue playing if unofficial flags are displayed or political chants are heard in the stands, Iranian Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali has said.

Team Melli will open its Group G campaign at the global showpiece – co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada – against New Zealand on Monday at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, California, home to a large Iranian diaspora community. Iran will then face Belgium at the same venue six days later before taking on Egypt at Lumen Field in Seattle, Washington, on June 26.

"We have made it clear that if, in any stadium where we play, we see a flag or symbol other than our own national flag, or hear chants that violate accepted norms, the team manager is bound to halt the match," Donyamali said, referring to the Lion and Sun flag – Iran's national flag before the 1979 Islamic Revolution – as well as pos-

sible pro-monarchy chants directed against the Islamic Republic.

"It is the responsibility of the organizers to address and rectify such situations. The security apparatus overseeing the competition is responsible for ensuring suitable conditions for our team and, if necessary, suspending the game. Until these issues are resolved, we reserve the right not to continue playing. I hope such incidents do not occur, as we have been assured that all requirements and regulations will be fully observed," the minister added.

The Iranian national team has faced a series of obstacles in the buildup to what is arguably the most politically charged event in the country's sporting history, as it will be the first FIFA World Cup hosted by a nation receiving the team of a country with which it is at war.

The conflict prompted Iran to move its World Cup training base to the Mexican border city of Tijuana from Tucson, Arizona, as originally planned – a measure taken by the Iranian Football Federation (FFIRI) to avoid possible visa denials for members of the delegation.

The United States nevertheless declined to issue visas to 15 members of the team's support staff,



Iranian players are pictured during a first training session in Tijuana, Mexico, on June 8, 2026.

● MOHSEN DAVOUDI/FFIRI

including FFIRI Secretary-General Hedayat Mombeini and Vice-President Mahdi Mohammad Nabi. Upon arriving at Tijuana airport on Sunday, Iran head coach Amir Qalenoee complained that his team "should have been here last week

because a 12-hour time difference requires two weeks to adjust to." "Usually in these tournaments, ethical and human considerations should be respected before technical matters, and I do not think that has been the case for us," the

Iranian coach added.

Adding to the tensions, Iran's ambassador to Mexico, Abolfazl Pasandideh, said last week that the squad had been informed that, under the terms of their visas, the team must enter and leave U.S.

soil on the same day as its matches, raising questions about logistics and whether the restrictions could affect performance.

However, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security dismissed the envoy's claim as "untrue" on Tuesday, saying the Iranian team "will be able to arrive the day before their matches."

Meanwhile, the FFIRI announced on Tuesday that the United States had revoked its allocation of tickets for Iran's three matches, alleging that the decision was driven by "non-sporting and political considerations."

"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 federation said in a statement.

IWBF Men's Repechage:

Iran beats Poland to secure World Championship spot

Sports Desk

Iran's wheelchair basketball team booked its place at September's World Championship after defeating Poland 81-59 in its final Group B game at the IWBF Men's Repechage in Suphan Buri, Thailand, on Wednesday.

Team captain Morteza Abdi led the scoring for Iran with a game-high 25 points, while Mohammad-Hassan Sayyari posted a double-double of 18 points and 11 assists. Mahdi Abbasi, meanwhile, added 12 points

as Iran finished atop the group standings with a perfect record of three victories.

Poland's Mateusz Filipski also recorded a double-double with 13 points and 11 assists, while teammates Andrzej Macek and Krzysztof Grzegorz Kozaryna contributed 12 points apiece.

Iran began its campaign with an emphatic 77-24 victory over Senegal on Monday before defeating Brazil 75-63 the following day at Suphan Buri Indoor Stadium.

Under the tournament format, the top team in each group was due to face the

bottom-placed team from the opposite group, while the runners-up were to meet the third-placed team from the other pool, with the winners of the four crossover matches qualifying for the World Championship in Ottawa, Canada.

However, Wednesday's victory handed Iran direct qualification after Venezuela's late withdrawal from the tournament left Group A without a fourth-placed team. The World Championship will also serve as a qualification pathway for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games.



● paralympic.ir

FISU World University Championship Combat Sports: Iran sweeps 10 medals to dominate freestyle wrestling

Sports Desk

Iran dominated the freestyle wrestling competition at the FISU World University Championship Combat Sports in Brasilia, Brazil, securing medals in all 10 weight classes, including seven golds.

Four Iranians stole the show on Tuesday by claiming gold in their respective divisions.

Mahdi Rahimi opened Iran's account for the day by winning the 61kg final, while Mohammad Bakhshi defeated his Russian opponent to claim the title in the 70kg category.

Adel Panahian suffered a second-round defeat to a Russian wrestler but bounced back to beat the same opponent in the final and take gold in the 79kg Nordic bracket.

Erfan Alizadeh, meanwhile, defeated opponents from Canada, Brazil and Russia before capping Iran's remarkable campaign with a victory over a Turkish rival in the 97kg final.



success of Mahdi Veisi (57kg), Mohammadreza Hosseini (65kg) and Mohammad-Javad Salehi (92kg), who had claimed three gold medals for Iran on the opening day of competition in the Brazilian capital.

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

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

Mahdi Abbaspour, meanwhile, finished his 74kg campaign with a bronze medal. The Iranian defeated a German wrestler in his opening match before losing to a Russian opponent in the next round. He recovered in the bronze-medal match against a Moldovan rival to secure a place on the podium.

UWW World Rankings:

Amouzad rises to No. 1 in freestyle 65kg

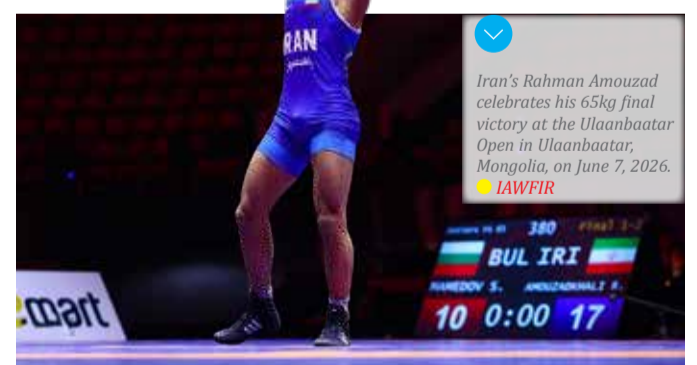
Sports Desk

Iranian freestyle wrestler Rahman Amouzad has climbed to the top of the UWW World Rankings in the 65kg division following his gold-medal triumph at the Ulaanbaatar Open in Mongolia.

The world champion made a spectacular return to international competition since the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games, capping his campaign on Sunday with a remarkable comeback victory over Bulgaria's Shamil Mamedov in the final.

Trailing 8-1 at the break and 10-3 with just 1:22 remaining, the 23-year-old Iranian produced a sensational late surge to secure a 17-10 victory and avenge his defeat to the Russian-born wrestler in the bronze-medal match at the 2023 World Championships.

The result further underlined Amouzad's consistency on the international stage. The Iranian, who won silver at the Paris 2024 Olympics, has now lost only two of his last 30 international bouts. Speaking after the final, Amou-



Iran's Rahman Amouzad celebrates his 65kg final victory at the Ulaanbaatar Open in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on June 7, 2026.

● IAWFIR

zad said he would prefer not to compete at September's Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, opting instead to focus fully on pursuing the third World Championship gold medal of his career at October's event in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Iran's five-man squad completed a clean sweep of freestyle medals at the latest Ranking Series tournament in the Mongolian capital.

Mohammad Nokhodi claimed gold in the 86kg category, while Mahdi Yousefi took silver at 79kg.

Ahoura Khateri (61kg) and Abolfazl Rahmani (92kg) added bronze medals to Iran's tally. Elsewhere in the freestyle rankings, Iran's Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan is ranked second behind Russia's Zavur Uguev in the 61kg division, while Amirali Azarpira (97kg) and world champion Amirhossein Zare (125kg) occupy second place in their respective weight classes. Kamaran Qasempour sits third in the 86kg rankings behind American Zahid Valencia and Azerbaijan's Arsenid Dhiocv.

Mashhad-e Kaveh emerges as potential world heritage candidate

Iranica Desk

Nestled among the green plains and foothills of the Zagros Mountains in Chadegan, Isfahan Province, a village stands as a testament to Iran's historical, cultural and religious identity: Mashhad-e Kaveh.

According to local beliefs and historical accounts, Mashhad-e Kaveh is traditionally believed to be associated with Kaveh the Blacksmith, the legendary hero of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. In the epic, Kaveh, a blacksmith by profession, leads a revolt against the tyranny of Zakhak and becomes a symbol of resistance against oppression and injustice, according to IRNA.

Local narratives say that after defeating Zakhak, Kaveh's remains were returned to his homeland according to his wishes and buried near the tomb of his son, Karen, in the area of Kovaliyeh. Over time, the village became known as "Mashhad-e Kaveh."

What distinguishes the area from many other historical sites is the combination of ancient Iranian heritage with Islamic spirituality and culture. Alongside the tomb attributed to Kaveh the Blacksmith stands the shrine of Imamzadeh Heydar ibn Ali, a site that many researchers and local residents consider a symbol of the connection between ancient Iran's struggle against injustice and the justice-oriented traditions associated with the descendants of Imam Ali (PBUH).

Today, Mashhad-e Kaveh is more than a religious or tourism destination; it is regarded as a living record of the continuity and coexistence of Iran's cultural and historical currents. The site preserves stories of legendary heroes and religious figures side by side, passing on a message of resistance against oppression and the defense of justice to future generations.

A cultural heritage expert said on Monday in an interview with IRNA that the tomb attributed to Kaveh the Blacksmith in Chadegan has exceptional potential and could become one of Iran's candidates for future world heritage registration.

Masih Vafadar said the monument still requires further archaeological studies before a complete nomination dossier can be prepared for global registration.

He added that accurately introducing the village of Mashhad-e Kaveh through scientific and documented research, along with improving facilities and training local residents to host visitors, would be the first step in this process.

The expert said that cultural and historical tourism packages and event-based tours could later be developed to attract domestic and international visitors.

Vafadar also emphasized the village's special role as one of the identity-shaping landmarks of Chadegan and called for greater attention to its potential and infrastructure needs.

Chadegan Governor Abdullah Sanaei said Mashhad-e Kaveh, with a population of more than 3,700 people, is among the Chadegan's active and dynamic villages. He said residents have built a strong social identity based

on unity, shared values, and their historical and cultural background.

He stressed the need to improve public services and tourism facilities, including guesthouses, pilgrim accommodations, libraries and recreational infrastructure, so the village can better function as a regional cultural and tourism hub.

The governor also announced plans for development projects, including the construction of a multi-phase guesthouse, and invited investors to participate in completing tourism infrastructure in the village.

Sanaei noted that Mashhad-e Kaveh's location near the Zayandeh Rud River has contributed to its appeal as a tourist destination, with the village hosting many travelers every year.

He added that the village's development indicators are favorable, making strategic and future-oriented planning essential for expanding tourism, cultural activities and services.

The head of Chadegan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department also said the historical monument currently receives an average of around 20 visitors per day, with numbers increasing during holidays and weekends.

Gholamali Safari said that despite the monument's special historical value, current visitor numbers remain below expectations and that greater promotion and planning are needed. He added that accommodation facilities, including guesthouses and eco-lodges, have been prepared for travelers, helping support future tourism growth in the area.

Safari noted that complete restoration and renovation work on the monument was carried out in 2023, leaving the structure in good condition.

However, he said further tourism development requires projects such as expanding eco-lodges, improving landscaping and upgrading visitor services to make better use of the site's historical and cultural potential.

Mashhad-e Kaveh is a historical structure dating back to the Ilkhanid period (around the 8th century AH). It was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 2018.

The complex includes two ancient graves and two graves from the Islamic era and is considered one of the most important historical sites in Chadegan.

From an archaeological research perspective, the Chadegan and its surrounding landscape occupy an important position in studies of settlement continuity in the central Zagros corridor. Although systematic excavations in the immediate vicinity remain limited, surface surveys and regional studies in western Isfahan have identified scattered evidence of ancient habitation, including pottery scatters and architectural traces that suggest long-term but fluctuating human use of the landscape. The proximity of the region to intermontane routes linking the Zagros highlands with central Iranian plains also increases its potential significance for understanding patterns of movement, seasonal settlement, and resource exploitation in different historical periods.



Attributed tomb of Kaveh the Blacksmith
IRNA



Chadegan
IRNA



Qal'eh Ben Hill in Babol reveals layers of ancient history

Iranica Desk

The second season of archaeological excavations at Qal'eh Ben Hill (Ben Castle Hill), located in the town of Khoshroud Pey in Babol, is currently underway as part of a joint research project between the University of Mazandaran and the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of the province.

The project is being carried out in cooperation with the Babol Governor's Office and Khoshroud Pey Municipality, under a permit issued by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, and is led by Mojtaba Safari, a faculty member at the University of Mazandaran, according to chtn.ir.

Safari, head of the excavation team, said that the archaeological site of Qal'eh Ben Hill has been registered as a national heritage monument of Iran. Part of the site was damaged in 2011 during road construction and the widening of an urban road, and approximately three hectares of the original area remain today. The first season of archaeological excavation at the site was conducted in 2018. He explained that the second season of excavation aims to expand field investigations, identify architectural structures, reconstruct the subsistence patterns of the site's inhabitants, and clarify the settlement sequence of the area.

Preliminary findings from this season indicate that the upper layers of the site belong to the Islamic periods. These layers contain architectural remains from the Qajar era, including parts of a water supply and sewage disposal system. Archaeologists have also uncovered characteristic Islamic-era pottery, particularly from the early and middle Islamic centuries, along with metal and glass artifacts.

The archaeologist noted that evidence from the historical period has been identified in the lower layers, a significant portion of which is associated with burials from this era. He added that some of these graves were unfortunately damaged and destroyed in previous years by illegal excavators. However, pottery dating to the Iron Age and historical periods, particularly the Parthian and Sassanid eras, along with several metal objects, has been discovered in the layers associated with this period.

Safari further stated that at a depth of about two meters below the surface, researchers identified a deposit of fine-grained silty sediments containing numerous remains of small freshwater snails but no cultural materials. Initial studies suggest that this deposit was likely formed through the gradual separation of a branch of a meandering river, resulting in the creation of an oxbow lake. This natural event appears to have caused a settlement and cultural hiatus at the site, probably spanning the period from the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age until the re-establishment of settlements

during the historical and Islamic periods.

He added that at a depth of approximately three meters, cultural layers dating back to the Late Bronze Age were identified. These layers include architectural remains such as door thresholds, areas associated with hearths and cooking activities, as well as fallen and scattered mud-brick remains. Among the most significant discoveries from this section are grinding stones, stone mortars, and a collection of distinctive Late Bronze Age pottery.

Safari emphasized that the project has been designed as a long-term research initiative. In addition to its academic objectives, it seeks to assess the potential of Qal'eh Ben Hill to become a site museum in the future. The site's strategic location at the entrance to the town, the remaining extent of the archaeological area, the richness of its cultural layers, and the valuable results obtained from excavations are among the factors enhancing its potential for cultural tourism development and the promotion of the region's historical heritage.

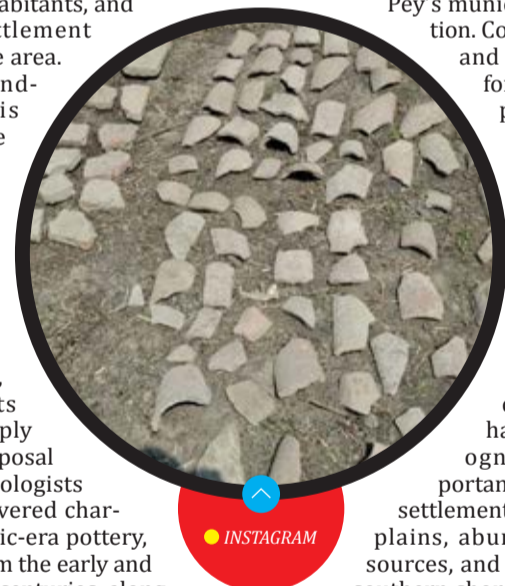
He concluded that the project is being implemented with the support and cooperation of officials in Babol, the Western Bandpey District, and Khoshroud

Pey's municipal administration. Continued research and preservation efforts, he said, could pave the way for the future introduction and cultural utilization of this valuable heritage site as a site museum.

Babol, located in the central part of Mazandaran Province, has long been recognized as an important area for human settlement due to its fertile plains, abundant water resources, and proximity to the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. Archaeological evidence from

northern Iran indicates that communities have inhabited this region from prehistoric periods, with settlements developing along rivers and natural waterways.

The archaeological record of Mazandaran reflects a long sequence of cultural developments, including the Bronze Age, Iron Age, and historical periods. The region played a role in wider cultural networks connecting the southern Caspian area with other parts of the Iranian Plateau. Findings from archaeological sites across Mazandaran have revealed evidence of early agricultural activities, craft production, pottery traditions, and regional trade connections. The location of Qal'eh Ben Hill within this historical landscape highlights its importance for understanding ancient settlement patterns in Babol. The site's layers, spanning from the Late Bronze Age to the Islamic periods, provide valuable information about changes in architecture, economy, environment, and daily life over thousands of years. Its proximity to ancient waterways also suggests that environmental factors played a significant role in shaping settlement continuity and abandonment in the region.



INSTAGRAM

Iran sets out tourism roadmap for postwar era in Spain



Iranian Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri (C) and members of his delegation, including Deputy Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey (R), pose for a photograph on the sidelines of the UN Tourism Executive Council meeting in Toledo, Spain, June 10, 2026.
 ● CHTN

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran launched a new national tourism initiative aimed at strengthening its position in global travel markets and preparing for postwar recovery, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri said on the sidelines of the 128th Executive Council meeting of UN Tourism in Madrid on Wednesday. Speaking at the gathering, Salehi-Amiri said Iran had adopted a forward-looking strategy centered on sustainable and resilient tourism, aligning its plans with international efforts to shape the sector through 2027, CHTN reported. The minister unveiled the national program, 'Iran; The Beginning of a Story,' describing it as an effort to present a comprehensive and

authentic image of the country to international audiences. "Iran is among the few countries that simultaneously possess exceptional natural attractions, cultural heritage, civilizational tourism, religious tourism, health tourism and diverse cultural experiences," Salehi-Amiri said. "These unique advantages must be introduced to the world through a coherent national and international narrative." He said regional markets, particularly neighboring countries, the Persian Gulf region, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan and the broader Muslim world, remain at the center of Iran's tourism development strategy. Salehi-Amiri also stressed the need for what he called a "comprehensive, coherent and future-oriented" roadmap for the post-war period,

adding that discussions with tourism officials and policymakers in Madrid focused on expanding cooperation and preparing the ground for renewed visitor flows. The minister said Iran intends to leverage tourism diplomacy and international partnerships to amplify its presence in the global tourism industry. As part of that strategy, Tehran is prioritizing coastal tourism development along the country's southern shores, including Hormozgan, Khuzestan and Abadan, areas he described as possessing significant untapped potential for investment and growth. "With its immense cultural and civilizational capital, Iran is pursuing constructive engagement with the world through tourism," Salehi-Amiri said.

Tirana crowns Iranian short 'Pasta Alfredo'

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film 'Pasta Alfredo,' written and directed by Leila Noei and produced by Roham Rasouli, won Best Student Short Film at the 13th Dea Open Air International Film Festival, held in Tirana, Albania, from June 1 to June 5. The award marks another international milestone for the Iranian production, which screened in competition at the festival and received the top prize in the student section following its June 5 screening, Mehr News Agency reported. Dea Open Air brings together filmmakers, students, critics, researchers and audiences from around the world, serving as a platform for cultural exchange and emerging cinematic voices.



Pasta Alfredo has continued to build momentum on the international festival circuit. The film previously competed at the 21st DecimiNuti Festival and the 23rd CortiSonanti Festival in Italy, the 33rd Saint Anna Festival in Russia, and the competitive section of the 14th FERFILM Festival in Kosovo. Shot over two days in Tehran's Ekbatan residential complex, the film

stars Mahna Seydi, Saeed Nejati, Sima Khanvakili, Barbod Farshidzadeh and Mohammadreza Ariansadr. The story follows Niloufar, a 14-year-old girl who tries to bring warmth to a cold household by organizing a birthday celebration for her cat and cooking pasta, a simple act that becomes a quiet gesture of hope and human connection.

Minab school story prize draws 4,000 entries from five continents

Arts & Culture Desk

More than 4,000 entries from five continents have been submitted to the international Minab School Six-Word Story Award, themed "168 Untold Stories," organizers said on Wednesday, as writers from around the world joined a literary initiative promoting children's rights, peace, patriotism and hope. The contest, organized by the Office of Persian Literature and Language under Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, has received over 3,000 entries in Persian and around 1,000 in Arabic and English from countries including Italy, Pakistan, the United States, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Serbia, Egypt, the Philippines, Algeria, Libya, Mali and Tunisia, ILNA reported. The award challenges writers to tell a complete story in just six words, a highly disciplined literary form that prizes brevity while leaving room for interpretation and reflection.



Organizers described the initiative as a platform for concise narratives that can resonate across borders and cultures. The competition also commemorates the children of Minab, a southern Iranian city, including 168 children who were killed in US-Israeli strikes on February 28, turning personal loss into a global call for peace and human dignity. "The Minab window remains open to stories only until July 21," organizers said, stressing that the submission deadline will not be

extended. Each participant may submit up to six stories. An international panel of judges and literary experts will review the entries. Winners will be announced at a closing ceremony and will receive a commemorative statuette, a certificate of recognition and cash prizes. The volume and geographic spread of submissions have positioned the Minab School Prize as an emerging international forum for minimalist storytelling and cross-cultural dialogue.

First motorcycle licenses to be issued for Iranian women within weeks

Social Desk

Iran will begin issuing motorcycle licenses to women within the next month, Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs Zahra Behrouz-Azar said in Tehran on Wednesday, signaling the final stage of a long-awaited nationwide program that formalizes women's access to motorcycle training, insurance coverage and road safety protections. Speaking on the sidelines of a cultural event at Tehran's Vahdat Hall, Behrouz-Azar said all administrative procedures had been completed and implementation was delayed only after driving schools temporarily sus-

pending licensing-related services during the recent conflict, IRNA reported. "Less than a month from now, licenses will be issued," she said, adding that the first permits would be granted to instructors who will train future applicants across the country. Authorities plan to draw on women already active in Iran's motorcycle sport federations and provincial associations to build a network of certified instructors. The minimum licensing age will mirror existing rules for men at 18. The announcement marks a major step in the rollout of a government framework approved

in January 2026 that established formal training, testing and safety requirements for female riders. The regulation tasked law enforcement authorities with organizing practical instruction and examinations while prioritizing safety standards and insurance coverage. Behrouz-Azar said the initiative responds to practical realities as more women use motorcycles for daily mobility. "Today our daughters are present in these fields, and we are concerned about their safety and insurance," she said. The vice-president framed the development as part of a broader effort to remove barriers

facing women and expand opportunities in public life, citing policies aimed at strengthening women's participation and access to services. She also highlighted another priority for her office: improving women's access to finance. Despite growing participation in the workforce, women, particularly entrepreneurs and female heads of household, continue to face obstacles in securing credit and investment capital, she said. To address the issue, the government has submitted proposals to Parliament's Economic Commission to increase loan-guarantee ceilings and ease access to financing. "Wom-



en work alongside men today, but their access to financial resources remains lower," Behrouz-Azar said.