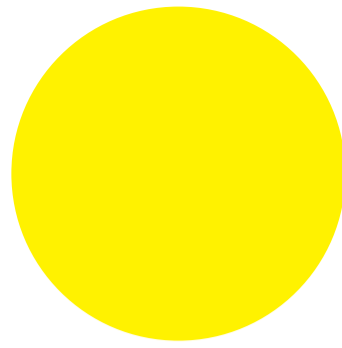


'Art & War' exhibition
Tehran museum
show traces
Iran's epic
tradition from
'Shahnameh'
to Ashura



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Iran's Ramin Rezaeian scores their first goal past Egypt's Mostafa Shoubir during a FIFA World Cup match in Seattle, US on June 26, 2026. **REUTERS**

Conspiracy behind Lebanon-Israel deal

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Lebanon, Israel and the United States on Friday signed a trilateral framework agreement aimed at paving the way for a peace accord between Israel and the Lebanese government. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed the agreement as a "major achievement," but Hezbollah has firmly rejected it. Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem explicitly described the deal as "null" and humiliating, arguing that it reflects Lebanon's surrender of its sovereignty. Meanwhile, Hassan Fadlallah, a Hezbollah lawmaker, warned that the Lebanese government would be unable to implement the agreement unless it accepted the prospect of civil war with US backing. In an interview with Iran Daily, Middle East affairs expert Hassan Hanizadeh discussed argued that the deal is the product of a domestic, regional and international conspiracy and poses a serious threat to Lebanon's national security.



Hassan Hanizadeh

IRAN DAILY: What impact will the recent Lebanon-Israel understanding, brokered by the United States, have on the balance of power between the Lebanese government, Hezbollah and external actors? Can it be viewed as a step toward limiting Hezbollah's role?

HANIZADEH: In practice, the memorandum of understanding signed between Lebanon and the Israeli regime in Washington under US supervision was concluded with several objectives in mind. The first is an attempt to disarm Hezbollah. The second is to create tensions and conflict between Hezbollah and Lebanon's existing political factions. Ultimately, the goal is to empty southern Lebanon of its residents. Since the majority of the population in southern Lebanon belongs to a particular religious community, specifically Lebanon's Shiite community, the intention is for southern Lebanon to remain a depopulated zone.

For this reason, the agreement is entirely imposed and is the result of a domestic, regional and international conspiracy. The disarmament of Hezbollah and restrictions on its presence in southern Lebanon could effectively turn Lebanon into a playground for incursions by the Israeli military.

Even after the agreement was signed, Israel has repeatedly attacked residents of southern Lebanon and forced them from their homes.

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Iran slams US for violating Islamabad deal after air raids on southern coast



An F-35B stealth fighter jet is prepared for flight aboard USS Tripoli as the ship sails in the Arabian Sea.
CENTCOM

International Desk

Iran on Saturday condemned the United States for violating the Pakistan-mediated deal agreed to end the war against the Islamic Republic, after US air raids targeted several locations along the country's southern coast. "The US terrorist army's aerial strikes on Iran's coastal monitoring facilities

constitute a clear violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and a blatant breach of Article 1 of the ceasefire MoU," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The ministry also noted that "the Zionist occupation and apartheid regime [of Israel], in coordination with the US, simultaneously attacked Lebanon," which it said also constitutes a viola-

tion of the ceasefire agreement. "Iran will defend its sovereignty, security, and national interests with all its might," the statement read, emphasizing Iran's inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter. The ministry said Iran's Armed Forces had conducted defensive strikes "against targets linked to US aggressor forces" in response to the attacks,

adding that "the responsibility for the consequences of this situation lies with the aggressor and covenant-breaking US regime and any parties complicit in its aggressive actions." The statement also called on all countries on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf to adhere to the principle of good neighborliness and to refrain from allowing aggressor parties to use their territory and facilities for attacks against Iran.

Transit through Strait of Hormuz

In a statement on Friday night, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that it had carried out assaults against what it claimed to be Iranian missile and drone storage sites and coastal radar positions in response to what it called an Iranian attack against a Singapore-flagged cargo ship passing through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran on Friday warned vessels not to enter or leave the Persian Gulf through the strait without its permission. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem

Gharibabadi said that any credible framework for maritime transit must be based on coordination with Iranian authorities and in line with Article 5 of the agreement signed between Tehran and Washington.

Hours after the CENTCOM's statement, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said its forces conducted retaliatory strikes, targeting "the deployment sites of the US terrorist military in the region".

"Should this aggression be repeated, our response will be broader than this," the IRGC said.

Bahrain on Saturday said that it was targeted by what it called several Iranian drones early Saturday, accusing Tehran of "sabotaging peace efforts". The US attacks came more than a week after Tehran and Washington signed a 14-point Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding to end US-Israeli wars on all fronts, including Lebanon, lift US sanctions, remove the US naval blockade on Iran, and restore commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz within 30 days.

Rescuers search rubble for survivors as Venezuela earthquakes kill at least 920

Over 50,000 people missing after twin quakes

International Desk

Desperate Venezuelans and rescue teams raced to find more than 50,000 people still missing after the powerful twin earthquakes rocked areas near the capital of the south American country on Wednesday.

Government said on Friday that 920 people have so far lost their lives and 3,360 people have been injured after the quakes devastated parts of Caracas and surrounding areas.

The first 7.2-magnitude quake was followed seconds later by an even stronger 7.5-magnitude one, according to the US Geological Survey (USGS), with both occurring close to the surface, making destruction more severe.

The ground shook once again Friday afternoon, a weaker 4.9 temblor that was felt in the capital Caracas and nearby Maracay.

The USGS estimated more than 10,000 deaths were possible, which would make the disaster one of Latin America's deadliest earthquakes of the last century. Nearly 7 million people could be affected, the UN's migration agency said, as it supplied emergency shelter and other relief items.

The United Nations' aid chief



Volunteers and relatives search for possible victims amid the rubble of a collapsed building following earthquakes in Caraballeda, La Guaira state, Venezuela, on June 26, 2026.
AFP

Tom Fletcher also said Friday that more than 50,000 people are missing, warning that the death toll was likely to "rise significantly".

Earthquakes of similar magnitude claimed more than 200,000 lives in Haiti in January 2010 and 73,000 lives in Kashmir in October 2005.

Frustration mounted over the uneven pace of relief in some of the hardest-hit areas including La Guaira state, where residents and volunteers were still digging through rubble by hand amid shortages of heavy equipment and limited official presence.

A UN report estimated direct damage from the two quakes at about \$6.7 billion.

Witnesses, traveled along highways cracked by the quakes and buildings reduced to broken concrete and twisted metal, said some ruins were spray-painted with building names to help rescuers identify locations.

Volunteers ferried supplies on motorcycles from Caracas and Valencia.

Despite initially thanking the volunteers, interim President Delcy Rodriguez and other officials later told people to stay away from La Guaira city because clogged roads were making rescue operations more difficult. They announced roads would be closed starting at 8 p.m. (midnight GMT) except to official and registered response teams.

Rodriguez, who took power after the United States captured her predecessor in January, has pledged a major relief deployment.

Foreign rescue teams began arriving late on Thursday into Friday in the country already weakened by years of economic sanctions imposed by the United States.

Iran's Foreign Ministry also voiced "Iran's readiness to provide any assistance required in relief and rescue operations".

Hezbollah chief: Lebanon-Israel deal 'null and void' for legalizing occupation

International Desk

Hezbollah leader Sheikh Naim Qassem condemned the US-Israel-Lebanon framework agreement on Saturday, saying it is a major mistake by the government and that his group deems it null and void.

The agreement - which includes a pilot effort in which Lebanese soldiers take control of two areas currently occupied by Israel, as well as a process aimed at disarming Hezbollah - was signed in Washington on Friday after five rounds of talks.

"The framework agreement in Washington is humiliating, shameful, and a surrender of sovereignty. This agreement is null and void, and the provisions of the Iranian-American memorandum of understanding must be implemented," Sheikh Naim Qassem said in a statement.

Qassem called on the government to withdraw from "its sins that are ruining Lebanon".

He accused Lebanese authorities of committing a "grave blunder" and "legitimizing the continuation of the (Israeli) occupation for many years," which "may even lead to the annexation of these lands".

Hezbollah strongly rejects direct negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, which have been ongoing since April.

An April 17 ceasefire failed to

stop the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, but the violence has decreased since the US and Iran reached a memorandum of understanding last week.

Iran insists that any deal to end the broader war must include Lebanon.

Sheikh Qassem explained that the Islamabad memorandum of understanding was intended to guarantee Lebanon's security and sovereignty through a complete Israeli withdrawal within 60 days.

He described this provision as "a winning card in Lebanon's hands" that the government had never dreamed of possessing.

The Hezbollah leader also said that negotiations between the Lebanese government and the Israeli regime was a form of "gratuitous concession" to the Israeli regime and "a stab in the back of the resistance" in Lebanon.

He said that linking the withdrawal of the Israeli regime from occupied Lebanese territories to the disarmament of Hezbollah, as has been stipulated in the Washington agreement, is a "dangerous scheme that turns Lebanon into a toy in the hands of the enemy".

Sheikh Qassem said Hezbollah will continue to fight the Israeli regime and its occupation of southern Lebanon until the aggressors are expelled from the Arab country.



Israeli Ambassador to the US Yechiel Leter (l), US State Department Chief of Staff Daniel Holler (c), and Lebanese Ambassador to the US Nada Hamadeh sign a framework agreement at the US Department of State in Washington, DC, on June 26, 2026.
AFP

According to the text of the deal shared by the US State Department, Lebanon and Israel, officially at war for decades, expressed their intent to "conclusively end the conflict, address its underlying causes, and to therewith formally conclude any state of war between them". The agreement sets up a process during which Lebanon's military is due to "restore effective sovereign authority over all Lebanese territory, pending the verified disarmament of non-state armed groups".

Shortly after the deal was announced, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his forces will remain in occupied Lebanese territory "as long as Hezbollah has not disarmed".

Conspiracy behind Lebanon ...

So far, 180 villages in southern Lebanon have reportedly been occupied or destroyed by the Israeli army, and this is regarded as a serious threat to Lebanon. In addition, Lebanon's constitution explicitly states that Lebanese governments should not negotiate with or sign agreements with Israel. Therefore, this constitutes a clear violation of Lebanon's constitution.

However, President Joseph Aoun, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and Foreign Minister Youssef Raji are the three figures who, under the influence of domestic circumstances as well as pressure from certain Arab countries and the United States, agreed to this

course of action and signed the agreement with Israel. This could pose a serious threat to Lebanon's internal security.

Hezbollah has criticized the understanding. In your view, what are Hezbollah's primary concerns regarding this agreement?

Given that the Lebanese army fundamentally lacks the necessary capability to safeguard Lebanese citizens in the south, a responsibility that falls on Hezbollah, it appears that the next phase will involve efforts to disarm the group. This could represent a serious threat to the security of the Lebanese people, particularly those living

in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah will certainly not lay down its arms. However, there appears to be a plan to deploy forces affiliated with self-proclaimed Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa in southern Lebanon to establish a security belt for Israel. Israel, the United States and several Arab countries are reportedly consulting with Ahmed al-Sharaa on this matter.

This is considered a serious danger because any confrontation between forces affiliated with Ahmed al-Sharaa and Hezbollah could set off a civil and regional war.

If the understanding is fully imple-

mented, is a deeper rift between the Lebanese government and Hezbollah likely, or will both sides be compelled to reach some form of internal compromise?

The demonstrations that have already begun indicate that the majority of the Lebanese people and many political groups oppose the agreement. Hezbollah is certainly opposed to it as well, although it has so far exercised restraint. Nevertheless, Lebanese citizens are currently taking to the streets to protest against the agreement. So, a compromise seems unlikely.

What consequences will this agree-

ment have for the Axis of Resistance? Naturally, weakening Hezbollah means weakening the Axis of Resistance. This represents a serious threat to the Islamic resistance movements in the region, and that is, in fact, the very objective.

The purpose behind the Lebanon-Israel agreement is to disarm Hezbollah. After that, the same scenario could be rolled out against other regional resistance movements, such as Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq and Ansarallah in Yemen, with the aim of disarming them as well.

This is an effort to remove the Axis of Resistance as a whole from the region and from the struggle against Israel.

Tehran, Yerevan discuss cross-border transport, economic cooperation

Economy Desk

The head of Iran's Plan and Budget Organization (PBO) met Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan on Friday to discuss cross-border infrastructure projects, transport links and broader economic cooperation.

Hamid Pourmohammadi, who also serves as a vice president, stressed the importance of strengthening peace and stability in the region, saying it would support the sustainable development of regional relations and cooperation, as reported by IRNA.

The two sides reviewed progress on joint border infrastructure projects, including construction of a second bridge linking the two countries, modernization of the Norduz-Meghri border crossings, efforts to remove transport bottlenecks, and customs cooperation through the integration of electronic data exchange systems. They emphasized the need to implement previously agreed measures.

Pourmohammadi and Pashinyan also discussed expanding cooperation in the energy, agriculture, infrastructure and mining sectors. The PBO chief thanked Armenia for what he described as the country's humanitarian support for Iran during difficult times, while Pashinyan asked him to convey his greetings to the Iranian president and the Iranian people.



Hamid Pourmohammadi (L), the head of Iran's Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), shakes hands with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Yerevan on June 26, 2026.

● IRNA

Pourmohammadi also conveyed the "warm greetings" of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to Pashinyan during the meeting, as reported by IRNA.

Later on Friday, Pourmohammadi met Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, who co-chairs the two countries' joint economic commission, with the talks focusing on facilitating the movement of Iranian trucks, expanding transit routes and boosting exports of Iranian goods to Armenia and along the North-South transport corridor.

The two sides proposed that an Armenian expert delegation visit Iran to explore additional opportunities for cooperation and address obstacles to expanding bilateral economic ties.

The Iranian vice president also said Armenian officials expressed satisfaction with the performance of Iranian contractors working on infrastructure projects in the country and indicated an interest in awarding Iranian companies additional transport and road construction projects.



As part of his visit, Pourmohammadi is scheduled to attend the inauguration of the Kajaran Tunnel and inspect the completed Norduz-Kajaran road section, both built by Iranian contractors, according to IRNA.

SATBA: Iraq seeks Iran's assistance in developing green energy projects



Economy Desk

A senior Iranian energy official announced on Saturday that Iraq has approached Iran for cooperation and the transfer of expertise in renewable energy, although discussions have yet to become substantive.

Mohsen Tarzatab, Iran's deputy energy minister and head of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), said Iran was prepared to share its experience in developing solar power plants and could also undertake renew-

able energy projects in Iraq.

"Iraq has requested cooperation and the transfer of experience in the renewable energy sector, but it is not yet very serious," Tarzatab told the ILNA news agency. He said Iran could also provide renewable energy expertise to other interested countries and transfer technical know-how developed by its power industry.

Tarzatab said Iran sees potential to develop wind power projects in the eastern regions of Khaf and Sistan and Baluchestan, with the possibility of exporting electricity to neighboring Afghanistan.

He added that renewable electricity exports are possible and that investors in the sector would receive the necessary permits from the government.

Currently, private-sector investors are permitted to export up to 10% of their electricity generation, Tarzatab said, adding that the government would consider raising that limit for new investments based on feasibility studies.

Under Iran's current framework, private companies are responsible for securing overseas buyers and marketing the electricity they produce, he said.

Iran, UAE restart trade via Jebel Ali Port after wartime disruptions

Tehran-Dubai flights to resume; Lufthansa plans return

Economy Desk

Trade between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has resumed through Dubai's Jebel Ali Port after disruptions caused by the recent US-Israeli war on the Islamic Republic, a senior Iranian trade official said on Saturday.

Mohammad-Sadeq Qanadzadeh, deputy for commercial services at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), said Jebel Ali, one of the Persian Gulf's largest transshipment hubs, had traditionally handled a significant share of trade between the UAE and Iran.

He said cargo shipments and transit through the port were suspended during the Ramadan War, leaving many Iranian containers stranded because importers were unable to clear their goods.

"Following the return of relative calm to the region, we

are now seeing the clearance of goods and containers from Jebel Ali to Iran," Qanadzadeh told the official IRNA news agency.

Trade routes between the two countries have reopened and commerce is gradually recovering, he said, adding that volumes remain below pre-conflict levels but are expected to return to normal.

"There is a gradual resumption of trade, and we hope conditions will return to what they were before the war," he said.

Meanwhile, the CEO of Imam Khomeini Airport City (IKAC) said Iran and the UAE are set to resume direct flights by the end of this week, while negotiations continue with foreign airlines over the gradual restoration of international air services to Iran.

Ramin Kashefazar said Iranian airlines have begun



Jebel Ali Port, UAE
● AP

preparations to restart flights on the Dubai route, with direct services between Iran and the UAE expected to resume later this week.

He noted that no foreign airlines have resumed flights to Iran yet, but talks are underway with several international carriers. According to the IKAC chief, flights operated by foreign airlines—particularly those from

neighboring countries—are expected to restart in the near future.

Kashefazar also said that Lufthansa is currently assessing the conditions for resuming its operations to Iran. Based on current expectations, the German carrier is likely to restart its Iran flights this winter, beginning with airlines within the Lufthansa Group, including Austrian Airlines.

SCI reports annual inflation at 62% in June

Economy Desk

Iran's annual consumer inflation rate rose to 62.0% in the month ending June 21, up from the previous month, while year-on-year inflation accelerated to 88.6%, according to data released on Saturday by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI).

The consumer price index (CPI) for Iranian households reached 656.4 in the third month of the Iranian calendar year, the agency said.

Annual inflation, measured as the average increase in consumer prices over the previous 12 months compared with the corresponding period a year earlier, rose by 4.3 percentage points from the previous month to 62.0%.

On a year-on-year basis, consumer prices increased 88.6% com-



pared with the same month last year, up 4.7 percentage points from the previous month's reading.

Monthly inflation stood at 5.9%, with prices for food, beverages and tobacco rising 6.8% from the previous month, while non-food goods and services increased 5.3%, according to the data.

The statistics agency said annual inflation varied across income groups, ranging from 60.1% for the high-

est-income decile to 68.5% for the second-lowest income decile. The gap between the highest and lowest reported inflation rates across spending deciles widened to 8.4 percentage points from 7.3 percentage points a month earlier.

The data comes after two periods of US-Israeli war against Iran, which disrupted trade and transport and prompted temporary closures of businesses and border crossings.

In era of water scarcity

Industrial camel farming key to red-meat self-sufficiency



INTERVIEW

Red meat remains one of the essential and highly consumed sources of protein in Iranian households, which largely comes from lamb, beef, and veal. Still, consecutive years of droughts, shrinking water and forage resources, and economic hardships have taken a toll on domestic production — so much so that nearly 10 percent of the country's demand is met through imports. Yet, despite these headwinds, 90 percent is still covered by domestic supply.

The incumbent Iranian government has set its sights on achieving self-sufficiency in red meat production, drawing up a comprehensive plan to cut down on costly imports and wean the market off dependency on foreign supply in the coming years.

To pull off this goal, the country must tap into every available capacity — from boosting the production of both light and heavy livestock to expanding the red meat industry at large. With precise planning and well-targeted support, Iran could make headway in reducing reliance on imports and shoring up domestic production. In this context, developing camel farming could step in as a crucial player.

The heavy demand for red meat and poultry has piled pressure on supply, largely because the production of camel, ostrich, and turkey meat has fallen short of demand. Although increasing camel herding alone cannot bring about full self-sufficiency in red meat, it could play a key role in realizing this policy, especially since populations in southern and central provinces of Iran already have a taste for camel meat. This, in turn, can carve out a bigger share for camel meat in the protein baskets of these families.

Reports show that over the past 20 years, the global camel population has shot up from 27 million to 47 million, with Somalia alone accounting for 30 percent of that number and its products. Kenya, Mali, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates, and Mauritania follow close behind

in global ranking.

In the Persian Gulf region, camel farming has expanded nearly tenfold over the last century. Meanwhile, in Iran, the camel population has dwindled from roughly 500,000 to 234,000, a more than 50-percent drop, leaving the country in eighth place in Asia and 20th in the world.

Statistics indicate that Sistan and Baluchestan Province of Iran alone hosts 74,000 camels, South Khorasan 34,000, Yazd 20,000, Hormozgan 18,000, southern Kerman 17,000, other parts of Kerman 10,000, Isfahan 8,000, Khuzestan 7,000, Qom 5,000, and Bushehr 4,000. Every year, around 5,000 tons of camel meat find their way into the domestic market. However, there are no solid figures for milk production, which is estimated to account for less than 1 percent of the total.

In the past, camels were mainly used for riding and carrying goods, but with modernization and urban growth, those purposes have fallen by the wayside. Still, the United Nations designated the year 2024 as the "International Year of the Camelids," a move that shone a light on this remarkable animal and its role in global food security.

Even now, amid the growing challenges of climate change and water scarcity, the camel's

unique resilience can come into play as a valuable asset for nations looking to get ahead of the climate crisis.

Alarm sounds for two-humped camel



Morteza Bitaraf Sani

Morteza Bitaraf Sani, an associate professor at the Yazd Agricultural and Natural Resources Research and Education Center, spoke up about camel-breeding and camel-herding challenges in an interview with IRNA. He said that, unlike the Arab and Persian Gulf states, where camel populations are rising, Iran's camel numbers have been slipping by nearly 1 percent annually over the past six decades — a decline more pronounced among the two-humped species, now teetering on the brink of extinction.

He noted that Iran's camel population fluctuates between 150,000 and 220,000, mostly consisting of one-humped camels. The two-humped type, having long fallen through the cracks of attention, is now en-

dangered. Although officials have begun to take notice, no tangible changes have come about yet.

Bitaraf Sani explained that most camels are clustered in Sistan and Baluchestan, South Khorasan, and Yazd Provinces, with Sistan and Baluchestan leading the pack in breeding. Golestan, he added, is emerging as a promising hub for the industry. Yazd Province, home to a major research station in Bafq, has come to serve as one of the country's key centers for camel studies. One remarkable outcome of this research is the launch of the "SarebanYar" system by Yazd researchers in partnership with the Animal Sciences Research Institute of Iran. Backed by the National Breeding Center, the system has caught on in most camel-breeding provinces, creating a broad network of herders now linked across the country.

According to Bitaraf Sani, Iran's camels are mainly of two species — one-humped and two-humped. The single-humped ones make up over 95 percent of the world's population in Africa and Asia. Iran is home to several genetic breeds, including Turkmen, Baluchi, Bandari, Kalkouyi, Mahabadi, Dashti, Zahedani, and Yazdi. By purpose, Turkmen camels are dairy-oriented, the central and eastern breeds are dual-purpose for

meat and wool, while those raised in the south are "Jamaz" or bred for racing contests.

Bitaraf Sani also pointed out that unregulated imports and exports are among the industry's biggest headaches, leading to genetic and breeding complications that call for stronger oversight and streamlined planning.

Globally, there are about 40 million camels, concentrated mostly across Africa and Asia. Nations like Somalia and Sudan top the table, while India and Pakistan boast strong dairy breeds. In Arab and Persian Gulf countries, besides meat production, camels are used in tourism and racing, with large-scale dairy farms springing up over recent years.

Camel breeding reform kicks off in Iran

Speaking about the camel breeding reform, Bitaraf Sani said that genetic improvement calls for accurate record-keeping and registration, which, given the grazing-based system in Iran, has so far posed a challenge. "Recently, with help from the Animal Sciences Research Institute, the SarbanYar system has been rolled out to register characteristics and issue electronic IDs for camels, a move that has gone a long way toward improving breeding programs."

According to Bitaraf Sani, one of the system's tasks is data recording and the use of machine learning to estimate weight. In one of Yazd Province's major herds in Saghand, around 450 records have been gathered so far. Each camel now gets issued an electronic ID, which plays a big part in breeding programs. "In Yazd, we've managed to carry out the country's first genome-wide survey studies on camels and identify genomic markers linked to economically significant traits, which has paved the way for a genomic selection kit," he added.

He believes that a combination of phenotypic and genomic selection can speed up the process of camel breeding. "On that note, a guideline has been drawn up for selecting male breeding camels using phenotypic records and the genomic

A caravan rides the central deserts of Iran on camelback while cows are being herded in the background.
CENESTA



The heavy demand for red meat and poultry has piled pressure on supply, largely because the production of camel, ostrich, and turkey meat has fallen short of demand. Although increasing camel herding alone cannot bring about full self-sufficiency in red meat, it could play a key role in realizing this policy, especially since populations in southern and central provinces of Iran already have a taste for camel meat. This, in turn, can carve out a bigger share for camel meat in the protein baskets of these families.

Camel meat at a butchery in Iran.
ISNA





◀ A camel and its rider cross the finish line at a camel-racing competition in Nowshahr-e Kalangi village, Hormozgan Province, southern Iran, on February 26, 2022.
● NADER NASERI/IRNA



◀ People are given a tour on camelback in Iran.
● NINARA

kit — an achievement that was singled out for honor three years ago during Research Week at the Ministry of Agriculture,” he maintained.

He emphasized that to keep this momentum going, the government must, under Article 3 of the National Livestock System, step in to back up and make use of such initiatives supporting genetic conservation.

The associate professor at the Yazd Agricultural and Natural Resources Research and Education Center added that camel meat, valued for its similarity to red meat but with lower cholesterol, has earned a special place among consumers, particularly in desert regions. Given Iran’s arid climate and the camel’s outstanding ability to cope with drought and water scarcity, expanding camel meat production could act as a sustainable and cost-effective solution to meet the country’s protein needs and cut back on red meat imports.

He said the main strategy in camel farming now is to maintain current herds and broaden dairy camel breeding. Since camel meat still barely figures in most people’s diets, the focus has long fallen by the wayside, though dairy production is in far better shape.

Bitaraf Sani stated that Iran’s camels make up roughly 2 percent of the global livestock population, compared with 20 to 25 percent in neighboring Arab countries. Ultimately, given Iran’s desert potential for breeding and free-range pasture capacity, along with the reduced dependency on feed inputs, camel rearing through hand-feeding can play a leading role in expanding livestock production.

He continued that from a quantitative point of view, the camel development strategy must zero in on pasture management. “Conducting rangeland audits, identifying unclaimed pastures, and promoting ecologically sustainable camel breeding based on grazing capacity and supplementary feed-

ing could serve as a solid foundation.” On top of that, he said, before industrial farms and dairy or protein production are developed, marketing, branding, packaging, and processing should be seriously pushed forward “through a non-governmental organization”.

He added that, with growing attention from authorities and untapped potential across the country, scaling up camel meat production could hold the key to self-sufficiency and long-term growth in the livestock sector.

The faculty member believes that, considering desert ecology and advances in breeding science, the development of camel farming could play a major part in ensuring national food security and animal protein supply. “However, this requires continuous government support, technical infrastructure, and attention to cultural and market challenges in Iran,” he concluded.

20 percent of Iran’s deserts ready for expansion

Previously, Nader Asadzadeh, deputy director for Research, Technology, and Findings, Dissemination at the Animal Sciences Research Institute of Iran, told IRNA that more than



Nader Asadzadeh

20 percent of Iran’s landmass is desert, unsuitable for any species other than camels — making them the natural choice. As global desertification gathers pace due to climate change, camel breeding has come under the spotlight worldwide. He noted that most research now comes out of the US and Europe, emphasizing camel applications and importance, while in Iran, the issue has been left on the back burner.

He attributed the decline of camel farming in Iran to growing urbanization and shifts in the animal’s traditional function, despite camels being multi-purpose livestock that lend themselves to the production of food, medicine, and hygiene products using their milk, meat, wool, and hide.

Asadzadeh noted that Iran’s one-humped native camels — Turkmen, Baluchi, Zahedi, Kalkouyi, and Mahabadi breeds — are suited to both meat and milk production, while the

two-humped species are mainly found in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan.

He went on to say that the Animal Sciences Research Institute has been following up on programs to preserve and expand camel breeding in Iran in recent years. “Ecological camel development has been worked into provincial development plans for suitable regions such as Sistan and Baluchestan, Khorasan, and Yazd. These projects are being carried out under the execution wing of the Executive Headquarters of Imam’s Order and are receiving backing from national authorities.”

According to Asadzadeh, strengthening scientific and research infrastructure, supporting camel breeders, and pursuing genetic improvement through new technologies stand out as crucial strategies that can help stabilize the red meat market and bolster food security.

He pointed out, “Extensive work on camel nutrition, breeding management, and genetic enhancement has been underway in Yazd, and genomic studies have taken off, focusing on breeds with higher milk and meat yields. Current data on camel population and production is being recorded in several

provinces, including Ardabil.” Not long ago, the FAO sounded the alarm over camel extinction in Iran — a stark warning for camel-rich provinces. Of the nation’s camels, 99 percent of the one-humped breed belong to hot and arid zones, while the two-humped type thrives in colder climates. There are now only 300 to 400 two-humped camels left in Ardabil Province.

National registration of indigenous breeds by 2027

The National Program for the Protection and Registration of Genetic Livestock Resources, led by the Animal Sciences Research Institute of Iran, revolves around the registration and conservation of native breeds, the sustainable use of genetic reserves, and the improvement of breeding standards. The program kicks into gear for 10 at-risk livestock and poultry breeds, including camels.

Its main focus areas include preserving gene pools, enhancing economically valuable and reproductive traits, improving livestock longevity, developing new genetic combinations, calculating economic coefficients, defining selection goals and indexes, carrying out group breeding among small livestock, and conducting Omics-based analyses of key economic traits. AI-driven Omics analytics are set to unify current applications and map out future directions. Technical guidelines and gene bank catalogs will be rolled out, and national IDs for native breeds are expected to be drawn up by 2027.

Given the importance of protecting Iran’s camel population, two years ago, Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljeh put forward a proposal at the first International Camel Congress to register Iranian camel farming in the FAO’s Global Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS).

The interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



◀ Bactrian camel (two-humped) in Shahsevan territories, northwest of Iran
● FATMA ZOLFAGHARI/ICCAS



Camel meat, valued for its similarity to red meat but with lower cholesterol, has earned a special place among consumers, particularly in desert regions. Given Iran’s arid climate and the camel’s outstanding ability to cope with drought and water scarcity, expanding camel meat production could act as a sustainable and cost-effective solution to meet the country’s protein needs and cut back on red meat imports.

FIFA World Cup: Qalenoey 'proud', but rues poor finishing in Egypt stalemate



Iranian defender Shoja Khalilzadeh reacts after being denied a late winner by VAR during a World Cup Group G game against Egypt in Seattle, Washington, U.S., on June 26, 2026.
● ALEX LIVESSEY/GETTY IMAGES

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoey praised his team's unbeaten World Cup campaign but lamented its profligacy in front of goal after a 1-1 draw against Egypt in a thrilling final Group G match in Seattle on Friday.

Iranian center-back Shoja Khalilzadeh thought he had scored a dramatic stoppage-time winner, only for the Iranian bench's wild celebrations to be cut short after his strike was chalked off by VAR for a marginal offside.

Saeid Ezzatollahi, meanwhile, headed against the woodwork in the seventh minute of added time as the draw, coupled with Belgium's 5-1 hammering of New Zealand in the simultaneous fixture, saw Iran finish third in the group with three points and remain in limbo over a maiden knockout-stage appearance in seven World Cup campaigns.

Despite missing out on an automatic place in the last 32, Team Melli made history by avoiding defeat in all three group-stage matches for the first time at the World Cup.

However, Qalenoey and his players were left waiting for the conclusion of the group stage to learn whether they had secured a last-32 meeting with Switzerland on Saturday as one of the eight best third-placed teams across the 12 groups.

Results elsewhere earlier in the day had already guaranteed Egypt a place in the knockout stage before kick-off at Lumen Field, but the African side still made the brighter start and took the lead through Mahmoud Saber inside five minutes.

Iran responded impressively and, although captain Mahdi Taremi saw his penalty saved by Mostafa Shobeir, the Asian side equalized shortly afterwards when Ramin Rezaeian smashed in a rebound from a tight angle in the 14th minute to become Iran's all-time top

scorer in World Cup history with three goals.

Before the dramatic finale, Taremi also headed against the crossbar from a corner late in the game, although the referee had already blown for a foul, meaning the goal would not have counted.

"Let me say how proud I am of my country, my people, and this team," Qalenoey said after the match, praising his players, who have competed at the World Cup against the backdrop of Iran's conflict with co-host the United States.

"We created plenty of chances and could have won. They scored from one opportunity, while we failed to convert 10. We also had a goal ruled out by VAR, and they say the scorer was offside by just five centimeters."

The Iranian, only the third domestic coach to lead Team Melli at a World Cup since its debut in 1978, added: "Despite everything we had to deal with, justice was not done for us."

"Perhaps this is another test from God. I believe in my team. We are a very complete side in attack. Now we have to wait and see what tomorrow brings. I also want to thank all the Iranian supporters, both inside and outside the stadium."

Qalenoey also criticized what he described as the hosts' treatment of his team throughout the tournament.

"What these young players have achieved deserves to be etched in history because the host treated us in the worst possible way," he said.

"Had we been allowed to arrive for the World Cup two weeks earlier, the team would have adapted better. Even our request to arrive two days earlier before this match, so we could prepare properly and remain in one place to recover, was not granted. If that had happened, we might have been in our best physical condition."

Reflecting on Iran's campaign, Qalenoey highlighted several

positives.

"There are a few important takeaways from these three matches. In all three games, the Player of the Match came from Iran. For the first time in our World Cup history, we finished the group stage unbeaten. I always thought we were an oppressed team in this tournament, but now I realize we are unlucky as well. Overall, these players deserve enormous credit."

The coach also contrasted Iran's preparations with those of its opponents. "Egypt played Brazil and England in warm-up matches before the tournament, while we faced very ordinary teams. That affected our technical, tactical, and physical preparation. Despite all that, the Iranian national team has earned the admiration of people around the world, and many want to see us remain in this tournament. We now hope tomorrow's results in go our way. The rest is in God's hands."

He acknowledged the unusual nature of his team's preparations.

"It's actually ridiculous that two World Cup matches ended up serving as warm-up games. But if we qualify, we'll be in even better condition than we were today."

Qalenoey also criticized his team's travel arrangements during the tournament.

"Scientifically and physiologically, players are at their lowest physical level immediately after a match. If you then make them travel straight to high altitude, recovery is delayed by several days. This is the third time this has happened to us. Now we have to travel back to Tijuana again, which means another three hours on the road. We were treated very badly, and I hope the world recognizes that. "I ask FIFA not to allow host countries to treat teams this way at future World Cups. I hope President Gianni Infantino takes action against this kind of behavior."

Volleyball Nations League: Piazza frustrated by inconsistency, calls for belief after Japan setback

Sports Desk

Head coach Roberto Piazza said his Iranian players must realize they are capable of "doing everything" after his side suffered a 3-2 defeat (25-19, 25-19, 20-25, 23-25, 15-12) to Japan in the FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League in Orléans, France, on Friday.

Iran was outclassed by the Asian powerhouse in the opening two sets but mounted an impressive comeback to level the match by taking the third and fourth. However, Japan held its nerve in the deciding set to hand Piazza's side a sixth defeat in seven preliminary-round matches.

The loss left Iran 16th in the 18-team standings with five preliminary matches remaining, dealing another blow to its hopes of reaching the VNL Finals for the first time in four years. Japan, meanwhile, remained top of the table by extending its unbeaten run.

Japan's attacking efficiency proved decisive, with the team posting an impressive 66 percent success rate on offense. Outside hitter and captain Yuki Ishikawa led all scorers with 22 points, including an ace. Fellow outside hitter Ran Takahashi added 19 points, including two aces, a block, and the match-winning point. Middle blocker Larry Ik Evbade-Dan finished

with 15 points, while opposites Kento Miyaura and Yuji Nishida, who shared playing time, contributed 15 and 13 points, respectively.

thing, but we need to prove it on the court," added the Italian coach, whose team opened the second week of preliminary action with a

ress since he took charge 21 months ago.

"I feel that we are improving, and I hope the players can see it too, although I am still not



Japanese opposite Yuji Nishida (1) hits a spike during a 3-2 victory over Iran in the FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League in Orléans, France, on June 26, 2026.
● VOLLEYBALL WORLD

Young outside hitter Ali Haqqarast paced Iran with 19 points. Captain Morteza Sharifi produced three aces and two blocks to finish with 16 points, while opposite Mobin Nasri added 13. Middle blocker Seyyed Eisa Naseri also reached double figures with 12 points.

"I told the guys that it was two games in one; the first two sets and the other three sets," Piazza said, reflecting on his team's inconsistent display. "So we need to understand which one we are."

"We have to believe that it's possible to do every-

five-set loss to Olympic champion France before falling in straight sets to the United States on Thursday.

Piazza lamented another slow start, saying it again proved costly for his side. He stressed that his players "need to control the game from the beginning" and criticized them for becoming distracted by the score instead of staying focused on the match whenever the teams were evenly matched during a set.

Despite the latest setback, Piazza expressed confidence that Iran has continued to make prog-

satisfied," he said.

"We need to play with the same quality, the same ability, and the same desire from beginning to end. In the first two sets today, we needed to play with more desire against an incredible team like Japan."

Iran will look to end Week 2 on a positive note when it faces Cuba, the only winless team in the competition, on Saturday.

The team will then begin its Week 3 campaign in Belgrade against Ukraine on July 15 before taking on Germany (July 16), Slovenia (July 17), and Turkey (July 19).

Croatian Kljaić named Iran men's handball coach

Sports Desk

Croatian coach Nenad Kljaić has been appointed as the new head coach of Iran's men's national handball team, ending months of speculation over the vacant position, the Iranian Handball Federation announced on Friday.

Kljaić, who signed his contract at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Zagreb, is due to arrive in Tehran on Tuesday to officially begin his tenure with the national team. The 59-year-old succeeds former Spain coach Rafael Guijosa, who parted ways with Iran after a disappointing campaign at January's Asian Men's Handball Championship in Kuwait, where the team lost four of its seven matches to finish 12th among the 15 participating nations.

Kljaić is no stranger to Asian handball, having coached Saudi Arabia in two separate spells between 2012 and 2018.

During his first stint, he guided Saudi Arabia to its best-ever finish at the IHF Men's World Championship, including a historic victory over Asian powerhouse South

Korea on the way to 19th place at the 2013 tournament. He returned to the Saudi bench from 2015 to 2018, leading the team to the gold medal at the 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games in Baku and a semifinal appearance at the 2016 Asian Championship, securing qualification for the World Championship.

Kljaić enjoyed an illustrious playing career, representing Yugoslavia 69 times before earning 145 caps for Croatia following the country's independence. His honors include two EHF Champions League titles, a

European Super Cup crown, and an Olympic gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Since moving into coaching in 2005, Kljaić has built an impressive résumé at both club and international level. He guided Croatian giants RK Zagreb to the domestic league title and the semifinals of the EHF Champions League.

At club level in Asia, he also led Qatar's Al Rayyan to the final of the 2014 AHF Champions League, where the team finished runner-up after losing to fellow Qatari side El Jaish in Doha.



Palm-leaf broom craft faces decline in Qasr-e Shirin

Iranica Desk

In the old and expansive palm groves of the border city of Qasr-e Shirin in Kermanshah Province, a deeply rooted local craft has long been woven into everyday life. Once an essential part of rural livelihoods, culture, and the household economy, palm-leaf broom weaving (Jarū-Bāfi) is now steadily fading under the pressure of lifestyle changes and the spread of industrial products.

This traditional craft is closely tied to the region's palm trees, reflecting a long-standing relationship between people and nature. Historically, every part of the date palm — from leaves to trunk — was used, leaving nothing wasted. Palm leaves were widely used to produce baskets, mats, hats, and especially brooms, forming one of the most important home-based handicrafts in the region, according to IRNA.

The origins of broom weaving in Qasr-e Shirin date back to periods when local life was entirely dependent on palm groves. At that time, date palms were not only a source of fruit but also a comprehensive provider of daily necessities. The craft evolved into a household activity carried out alongside farming and livestock rearing,



with families producing tools for their own use.

The production process involves collecting pruned palm leaves, drying them in the sun, and carefully weaving them together using natural twisting and knotting techniques. In many traditional cases, no thread or industrial material is used, preserving the craft's authenticity. The result is a lightweight, durable, and fully natural broom that was widely used in households.

In the past, women in rural areas played a central role in

this craft, working at home or in palm groves as part of their daily routines. Today, however, much of this traditional lifestyle remains only in the memories of older generations.

With modern lifestyle changes, industrial production, reduced reliance on handmade goods, and youth migration, broom weaving has seen a significant decline. Many household workshops have closed, and the transfer of skills to younger generations has become increasingly difficult.

Experts in handicrafts believe

the craft still holds strong potential for revival due to its low production cost, easy access to raw materials, and fully natural composition. They also point to the strategic location of Qasr-e Shirin — near the official border crossings of Khosravi and Parvizkhan — and the presence of Iraqi travelers and tourists as an opportunity to expand marketing and sales.

According to cultural heritage officials, training young people, supporting home-based businesses, and establishing

permanent handicraft markets could help revive the craft and reintegrate it into the local economy. However, rising costs and inflation have made handicrafts a low priority in household spending, further weakening production incentives.

Qasr-e Shirin, historically a palm-growing region, still hosts extensive date palm plantations, some over 80 years old. The city shares a long border of about 186 kilometers with Iraq and currently has around 900 hectares of palm groves, of which 650 hectares are pro-

ductive, supporting more than 15 varieties of dates.

Beyond agriculture, these palm groves also play an important environmental role as green belts and ecological shelters, while offering potential for agritourism and sustainable economic development.

Once a symbol of self-sufficiency and harmony between people and nature, palm-leaf broom weaving in Qasr-e Shirin now stands at a crossroads between preservation and oblivion.



IRNA

Echoes from empty villages in Sistan and Baluchestan Province

Iranica Desk

Among walls that still stand, the absence of people is more striking than the ruins themselves. Tamarisk branches stretch across dusty alleys, and windows look outward with no human eyes left to meet their gaze. This is the story of a sorrow — a life pulled from the earth, leaving behind only memories and traces of what once was.

These images do not tell the story of a sudden exodus. They tell of a slow and gradual departure. A village emptied not in a single day, but over years. The houses remain. The lanes remain. Even signs of life can still be found. Yet life itself has quietly slipped away from these frames. This photo essay pauses on the details, seeking to narrate a tragedy that unfolded in silence, according to IRNA.

Several villages in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province were gradually abandoned after years of recurring drought, sandstorms, and severe water shortages. Today, little remains but crumbling structures. Amid the destruction, the dry branches of tamarisk trees have wrapped themselves around abandoned homes, as if they are the last signs of life unwilling to leave this land behind.

Drought in Sistan and Baluchestan is no longer a temporary threat; it has become a chronic crisis. Ongoing disputes over water rights to the Hamun wetlands have devastated agriculture and local livelihoods, triggering widespread migra-

tion from villages surrounding the city of Zabol. Many residents have already left, while those who remain are slowly being pushed out of the social and economic fabric of community life.

Today, ruined homes and withered tamarisk trees stand as

is a corridor of remembrance. Every stone seems to carry a story of departure.

The wooden door remains half open, as if its last owner left in haste, promising, "I'll be back." Its paint has peeled away, and the lock has not turned in years, yet the door was never

When people retreat, nature advances. This image captures the contrast between staying and leaving. The tamarisks have remained. They have rooted themselves deeply and cast their shade without needing schools, jobs, or migration. Nature is not cruel in this

open the gate, and breathe life into it once again.

Windows waiting for an answer

The window opens outward, but the world beyond is equally silent. This frame represents the house's gaze toward the

but its purpose does not. It is a quiet symbol of the gradual collapse of a small society, where the absence of people is felt more deeply than anything else.

Village paused between past and future

The wide view of the village serves as the closing scene of this visual story. The houses are still visible. The land still exists. Yet life within them has faded. This image is not an ending — it is a pause. The village remains. It could one day live again.

For now, however, it stands in silence, watching its past drift slowly away through the frames. A past that has gradually receded, leaving behind only memories, empty homes, and the stubborn tamarisk trees that refused to leave.

Located in southeastern Iran, Sistan and Baluchestan is a province shaped by both water and its absence. For generations, communities in the northern Sistan region relied on the Helmand River and the Hamun wetlands for farming, livestock and daily life. But years of drought, recurring dust storms and shrinking water supplies have transformed the landscape. As fields dried and livelihoods disappeared, many residents left in search of work and stability elsewhere. The abandoned villages scattered across the region stand as visible reminders of an environmental crisis that continues to reshape one of Iran's most fragile borderlands.



reminders of a forgotten way of life. Documenting these scenes is an attempt to warn of the fate awaiting villages that are quietly fading into silence. The village's narrow alley was once a path of return — a route where footsteps echoed in the evenings and lights guided families back to their homes after dark. Today, it resembles a continuous line of memories. The mud-brick walls still stand, but there are no signs of recent passage. Silence dominates the scene. Not the silence of peace, but the silence of absence. This alley is no longer a destination; it

fully closed. This frame tells the story of homes that were abandoned rather than destroyed. In some, belongings still remain, while the walls continue to hold the warmth of memory. The absence of people is more visible than any crack or decay. The door symbolizes a departure once thought temporary, but which became a lasting absence.

When nature moves in

Along the edges of the village, tamarisk trees have quietly spread into places that were once cultivated fields and bustling spaces of human activity.



scene; it is simply carrying on. It is humanity that has been removed from the equation, leaving plants to fill the void.

Courtyard without voices

The courtyard still has its shape: walls, earth, perhaps a dry pool or a solitary tree. What is missing is sound — the laughter of children, evening conversations, the ordinary rhythms of life. More than anything, this image conveys loss. A courtyard that was once the heart of the home is now an empty space. It feels as though time has stopped here, waiting for someone to return,

outside world — a gaze that has gone unanswered for years. Windows are symbols of connection. Here, that connection has been severed. The image evokes a long wait, one that may no longer hold any hope of ending.

Empty gathering place

A mosque, a school, or a building that once served as a meeting place now stands in silence. The walls remain, but the voices have disappeared. The image illustrates how a place loses its meaning when the community that gave it life is gone. The building survives,

IRNA

'Art & War' exhibition

Tehran museum show traces Iran's epic tradition from 'Shahnameh' to Ashura



Arts & Culture Desk

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art opened the fifth exhibition in its ongoing Art & War series, showcasing 12 rare coffeehouse paintings that trace Iran's centuries-old tradition of epic storytelling from Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh' to the tragedy of Ashura. Titled 'Iranian Epic Narratives: From the Shahnameh to Ashura,' the exhibition, which opened on June 22 and runs through July 3, draws exclusively from the museum's permanent collection. It explores how artists transformed heroic and religious narratives into a visual language that has shaped Iran's collective cultural memory across generations, IRNA reported. The exhibition features works by leading masters of Iran's coffeehouse painting tradition, including Mohammad Modabber, Abbas Bolukifar, Ahmad Khalili, Hossein Hamedani, Ali Akbar

Larni, Mohammad Farahani, Hassan Esmailzadeh, Reza Hamidi and Ganji. Museum expert Salar Rafieian described the paintings as far more than folk or religious art, calling them "a popular medium for recreating collective memory" that extends a visual tradition from Mani's legendary Arzhang, through Persian miniature painting and Shia iconography, to the oral performances of Naqqali (Iranian dramatic storytelling). "These artists were not passive guardians of the past," Rafieian wrote. "They continually reinterpreted a centuries-old narrative tradition to address the social, ethical and political realities of their own time." He added that the paintings place the heroes of the Shahnameh alongside the martyrs of Karbala, forging "a shared moral memory" centered on justice, truth and resistance against oppression. University of Science and Culture pro-

fessor Mohammad Mohammadi said battle has remained one of the defining themes of Iranian art throughout history. Yet, unlike many Western depictions of war, Iranian visual traditions illuminate conflict through divine light rather than darkness. "The world is illuminated by divine grace," Mohammadi wrote. "That is why these scenes largely avoid the graphic violence one might expect." The exhibition marks the latest chapter in Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art's Art & War program, launched earlier this year to revisit the museum's collection through the lens of conflict and its enduring impact on artistic expression. Previous installments have featured works by Pop artists, Spanish modernists including Pablo Picasso, Antoni Tàpies, Robert Motherwell and Juan Gris, Mexican printmakers, and post-war European painters.

Iran launches WhartoCell, umbilical cord cell therapy for Osteoarthritis

Social Desk

Iran launched WhartoCell, an umbilical cord-derived stem cell therapy for osteoarthritis, after the product received approval from Iran's Food and Drug Administration for clinical use. The therapy was developed by researchers at the Royan Institute using domestically developed technology. Mehdi Lotfipanah, the institute's director of public relations and international affairs, said the treatment is designed to reduce inflammation, promote cartilage regeneration and improve joint function in patients with osteoarthritis. "The introduction of innovative cell-based therapies requires a scientific and evidence-based approach to ensure their appropriate integration into clinical practice," Lotfipanah said, adding that greater awareness among physicians and healthcare providers would facilitate broader adoption of regenerative medicine technologies. WhartoCell is an allogeneic stem cell therapy derived from Wharton's jelly of the neonatal umbilical cord. The mesenchymal stem cells used in the product possess anti-inflammatory and immunomodulatory properties while supporting tissue repair and regeneration. One of the product's distinguishing features is that it does not require genetic matching (HLA matching) between donor and recipient, allowing physicians to administer the treatment without lengthy preparation

procedures. As an off-the-shelf therapy, it is expected to improve patient access to advanced regenerative treatments. According to the institute, the product is manufactured under Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) standards, with quality and safety monitored throughout the production process. Although initially approved for osteoarthritis, researchers say the technology may have broader applications in regenerative medicine, including cartilage repair, tendon and ligament injuries, bone fracture healing, avascular necrosis (AVN), and the management of inflammatory joint disorders. Lotfipanah said the product also represents an important achievement in the development of indigenous biotechnology, reducing dependence on imported therapeutic products while expanding access for healthcare providers across the country. He noted that Royan Institute plans to increase scientific communication surrounding WhartoCell through specialized workshops, educational programs for physicians and patients, and scientific meetings, including activities alongside the upcoming 27th International Royan Congress. Established as one of Iran's leading centers for stem cell research and regenerative medicine, Royan Institute has developed several advanced cell-based therapeutic technologies over the past two decades as part of the country's growing biotechnology sector.

Iran seeks broader ECO academic partnership at Turkey EdTech meeting

Attack on universities 'assault on humanity's shared heritage': Minister

Social Desk

Iran's Minister of Science, Research and Technology Hossein Simaei Sarraf called attacks on Iranian universities "an assault on humanity's shared heritage" as he met ECO Educational Institute (ECOEI) President Akif Kirecci on the sidelines of the Turkey Educational Technologies Summit (TETZ 2026), where the two sides agreed to expand cooperation in artificial intelligence, academic exchanges and joint research. Speaking during the meeting, Simaei Sarraf said science "has no geographical identity and belongs to all humanity," adding that universities represent a common human legacy. Referring

to the recent 12-day conflict, he said dozens of professors and students had been killed and thanked the Turkish government and people for their support, MSRT reported. He also described Iran's higher education sector as an attractive destination for educational investment and voiced hope that scientific cooperation would deepen under peaceful conditions. His remarks followed Iranian officials' reports that more than 30 universities sustained damage during the conflict, affecting research laboratories, classrooms and student dormitories, while dozens of faculty members and students were killed. Kirecci said the ECO Educational Institute had enjoyed productive cooperation

with Iranian universities despite perceptions that working with Iran could be difficult. "Our experience has been very positive," he said, noting previous collaboration with Iranian academic institutions, including a conference in Isfahan that helped doctoral students publish in leading international journals. He said the institute is ready to expand cooperation on artificial intelligence and educational technologies and is also advancing a regional initiative to digitally preserve UNESCO-listed cultural heritage across ECO member states. The project includes three heritage themes from Iran and four from Turkey and is being implemented with



Ankara University's technology center and a team of historians. The two sides also agreed to pursue closer university partnerships, faculty and student exchanges, joint training programs, collaborative research projects, technology development and wider use of AI and emerging educational technologies.

Global streaming opens new doors for Iranian animation

By Mojdeh Nourollahian
Media Analyst

PERSPECTIVE

Today's global screen entertainment market is more audience-driven than ever before. As viewer preferences continue to diversify, video-on-demand (VOD) platforms have evolved into ecosystems where films and animated features can reach audiences across the world without being confined to a single dominant taste or commercial formula. The global film and animation marketplace has become increasingly fragmented over the past decade. It is no longer meaningful to speak of a single "global audience" with uniform, predictable preferences. Viewers in different countries make choices shaped by their cultural backgrounds, historical experiences, languages, and even their media consumption habits. A production that resonates with mass audiences in one market may appeal only to a niche demographic elsewhere. This diversity has significantly elevated the role of VOD platforms in how content is distributed, discovered, and brought to wider attention. Unlike the traditional theatrical model, where screen availability, release schedules, marketing campaigns, and box-office projections largely determine a film's prospects, streaming platforms operate on the principle of audience choice. Viewers are free to seek out the films or animated works that genuinely interest them, whether

a family-oriented feature or a historical, religious, or culturally rooted narrative that may not command broad theatrical appeal but carries strong resonance for a specific audience segment anywhere in the world. This is precisely what makes VOD services an effective launchpad for productions that do not necessarily cater to homogenized mainstream tastes. The experience of numerous countries over the past several years demonstrates that online platforms can serve as a vital gateway for non-Hollywood animation to break into international markets. Japanese anime, for example, has long leveraged streaming services and digital distribution to expand well beyond its domestic audience, cultivating dedicated fan bases worldwide. South Korea offers another compelling case, illustrating how sustained international distribution of cultural products gradually broadens global recognition of a country's creative output. Even across Europe, many independent animated productions from France, Ireland, and Spain have built international audiences less through theatrical box office than through streaming platforms, film festivals, and digital distribution networks. Against this backdrop, the arrival of an Iranian animated feature on major global VOD platforms is more than a symbolic milestone, it represents a tangible opportunity. The release of "The Boy and the Sword" (originally "Sword and Sorrow") on platforms such as Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV is significant because it demonstrates that Iranian anima-

tion is capable of clearing the professional gateways of established international distribution. Naturally, gaining access to such platforms requires meeting rigorous technical, production, and presentation standards; without those benchmarks, content simply does not make it onto these services or reach audiences at this level. The significance of this development extends well beyond a single title. Once one Iranian animated production secures distribution through global streaming platforms, it effectively helps pave the way for others. It sends an encouraging signal to domestic distributors, investors, and producers that the international marketplace is not the exclusive domain of a handful of countries. High-quality productions with a distinct identity and professional packaging can, in fact, earn international visibility. Every successful release of this kind strengthens confidence within Iran's animation industry while broadening its long-term horizons. Equally important, VOD platforms allow Iranian productions to be placed directly before global audiences without having to navigate the traditional gatekeepers of theatrical exhibition. Viewers are no longer dependent on the programming decisions of cinema operators or constrained by limited theatrical windows. Instead, they browse expansive digital libraries and gravitate toward titles that capture their interest. Within this environment, cultural distinctiveness becomes a competitive advantage rather than an obstacle. When Iranian animation is presented with pro-

fessional craftsmanship and international production standards, its unique cultural and narrative perspective can become precisely what draws audiences seeking fresh storytelling. The challenge now is to ensure that opportunities of this kind are not viewed merely as isolated successes. Participation in global streaming platforms should be recognized as a meaningful proof of concept, one capable of informing clearer cultural export strategies, strengthening international distribution networks, encouraging targeted investment, and raising production standards across the industry. If other countries have successfully leveraged online platforms to cement the global standing of their animation sectors, Iran can likewise capitalize on these opportunities through strategic planning and sustained commitment. For Iranian animation, gaining a foothold in the international marketplace ultimately depends on access to opportunity, and today, VOD platforms represent one of the most important avenues for doing so. The presence of "The Boy and the Sword" on major international streaming services stands as one of the clearest indicators of that potential. If built upon rather than treated as a one-off achievement, it could help open a new chapter in bringing Iranian animation to audiences around the world.

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