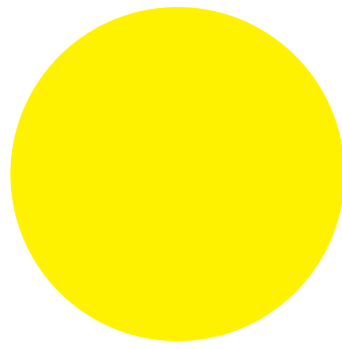


Pezeshkian says improving livelihoods remains government's top priority



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Leader orders legal pursuit of US-Israeli war crimes against Iran

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Parallel Hormuz corridors threaten Iran's strategic position

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

Following the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States, one of whose provisions

called for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, the two countries have once again become embroiled in limited confrontations over arrangements governing transit through the vital waterway. Iran insists that under the MOU, only arrangements endorsed by Tehran should be implemented, while reports indicate that a parallel shipping route has been established off the coast of Oman. Speaking to Iran Daily, Afifeh Abedi, an international affairs expert, said the United States is attempting to weaken Iran's strategic position in the Strait of Hormuz by bypassing the provisions of the Islamabad Memorandum and pressuring Oman to establish parallel routes.



Afifeh Abedi

IRAN DAILY: What legal, security and geopolitical consequences would parallel arrangements for managing or securing the Strait of Hormuz have for Iran?

ABEDI: From a legal standpoint, any attempt to establish parallel arrangements constitutes a unilateral measure lacking legal legitimacy, as it disregards the sovereign rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a coastal state. Moreover, such a move represents a clear violation of the Iran-US MOU, as Article 5 of the document explicitly defines the management of the Strait of Hormuz within the framework of coordination with Iran. Consequently, any action taken outside that framework would amount to a blatant breach of international commitments and would therefore lack legal validity.

Accordingly, any shipping route that has not been approved by Iran would lack guarantees for safe passage and would not benefit from insurance coverage or the necessary safety assurances. As a result, responsibility for any incident or potential damage would rest with entities operating outside the officially recognized arrangements.

From a security perspective, establishing parallel structures in a waterway that falls within the security jurisdiction of the Iranian coastal state gives Tehran the right to respond decisively, in accordance with both international and domestic law, to any unauthorized passage through its territorial waters.

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Memorial volume unveiling

Former FM Kharrazi sought to recast Iran's image abroad

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A group of former and incumbent Iranian officials unveils a book about former foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi, who was assassinated in an airstrike on his home in Tehran in April during the US-Israeli war on Iran, during a ceremony in the Iran Cultural and Press Institute in Tehran on June 28, 2026.

IRAN DAILY



Kazakhstan signs \$25m logistics deal at Shahid Rajaei Port

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FIFA World Cup: Late heartbreak sends unbeaten Iran packing

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Kolgah Zarrin excavations offer new insights into ancient Elymais Civilization

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Iran welcomes Iraq-proposed dialogue between Tehran, GCC states

Iraqi PM backs diplomacy to end regional conflicts

International Desk

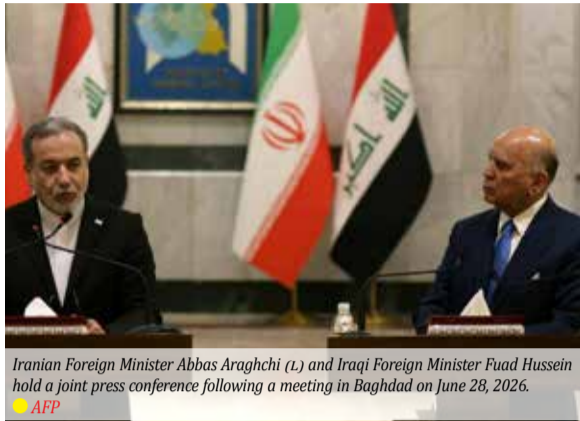
Iran's top diplomat said Iran welcomes an Iraqi proposal for dialogue between Tehran and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states in line with establishing a new regional security framework for the Persian Gulf that excludes external powers.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi made the remarks during a press conference with his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein in Iraq's capital Baghdad where he also held talks with the country's president and prime minister.

His remarks came as a recent aggression by the United States and Israel against Iran has damaged relations between Tehran and the Persian Gulf Arab states after Iran forced to launch attacks on the US military bases in those countries in response to the aggression.

"We talked about the security of the region, the security structure of the region and its future," Araghchi said.

"The recent war has had many lessons for all the countries of the region, and I believe that with the new approach that has been cre-



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) and Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein hold a joint press conference following a meeting in Baghdad on June 28, 2026.
AFP

ated, the security of the important Persian Gulf region must be reconsidered by all the countries of the region and that we should reach a new framework which includes all the countries of the region without the presence and interference of any country from outside."

"In this regard, we welcome the proposal of Mr. Fuad Hussein to establish dialogues between the countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, Iran, and Iraq - which he referred to as '6+2,'" the Iranian foreign minister said.

Following the aggression against Iran in February, Iran's Armed Forces target-

ed the US military bases in regional countries and restricted transit through the Strait of Hormuz, responsible for a fifth of global oil demand.

However, Tehran and Washington signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on June 18 following a series of mediated negotiations, which calls for an immediate and permanent cessation of military operations and continued diplomatic engagement between the two sides.

Challenge to Hormuz routes ups tensions

Araghchi warned that any attempt to bypass the Strait

of Hormuz routes agreed with the United States would "increase tensions" in the region.

"Any attempt to adopt new or separate arrangements compared to what is underway by the Islamic Republic of Iran, will only lead to more complicated situations and delays in the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and will increase the tensions," the Iranian foreign minister said.

"I urge all parties... to adhere to the memorandum of understanding and not to allow this MoU to deviate from its course."

Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi in a separate meeting with Iranian top diplomat said Baghdad strongly supports dialogue and diplomacy to end the ongoing tensions and establish stability in the region.

Araghchi once again affirmed Iran's steadfast support for Iraq and emphasized the importance of continued coordination to enhance bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields.

The Iranian foreign minister also held a meeting with Iraqi President Nizar Amedi.

Leader orders legal pursuit of US-Israeli war crimes against Iran



Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei
IRNA

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei called on Iran's Judiciary to pursue and restore the nation's rights that have been violated as a result of the US-Israeli wars of aggression since last year. In a Sunday message issued on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti and his companions, designated as the Judiciary Week, Ayatollah Khamenei said one of the most important legal and judicial issues facing the entire Iranian nation at the present time is pursuing and restoring those rights violated by "international criminals and arrogant and aggressive powers," Press TV reported.

The Leader said that safeguarding the rights of the Iranian people extends beyond individual legal matters and includes defending the country's collective rights against crimes committed by foreign aggressors.

He said the Judiciary in the Islamic Republic has the responsibility to protect people's rights, revive public rights and legitimate freedoms, combat corruption, enforce justice, uphold divine laws, and oversee the implementation of the law.

Success in carrying out those duties, he said, would strengthen public trust in the judicial system.

Turning to the country's most pressing legal challenge, Ayatollah Khamenei said pursuing the rights violated by international criminals and global aggressors, particularly since last year, is among the Judiciary's foremost responsibilities.

He said the blood of those killed in the two wars of aggression

against Iran - waged by the United States and Israel in June 2025 and February 2026 - together with the physical, psychological, material, and spiritual damage inflicted on Iran and its people inside and outside the country, forms the basis for hundreds or even thousands of significant legal cases.

The Leader also invoked the killing of children and unprecedented war crimes in Minab and Lamerd, attacks on medical and public service centers, and the deaths of victims ranging from newborn infants to the elderly.

Above all, he referred to the martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, whom he described as "the unparalleled personality, the unique jewel of the era, the great mujahid Leader," saying each case must be pursued seriously before domestic and international courts.

"What is certain is that the criminals must be brought to justice and made to face the consequences of their criminal acts," he said.

The Leader further argued that statements by certain American and Israeli leaders acknowledging, and even openly taking pride in, such acts constitute admissions of crimes that strengthen the legal basis for restoring the Iranian nation's violated rights.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said that implementing the martyred Leader's directive during his final meeting with judicial officials last year to investigate crimes committed during the 2025 war should now be extended to the latest imposed war and pursued continuously until judgments are issued and enforced by competent authorities.

IRGC targets US bases in Kuwait, Bahrain after renewed American strikes

International Desk

Iran's Armed Forces launched new missile and drone attacks on US military bases in Kuwait and Bahrain in response to renewed American aggression against Iranian territory.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in a statement said its Navy and Aerospace Force jointly carried out the operation between "2:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. on Sunday (local time)," targeting eight "key US military installations," including the "Ali Al Salem Airbase in Kuwait" and the "US Fifth Fleet headquarters at Salman Port in Bahrain."

According to the statement, the operation followed attacks carried out by the US against five Iranian coastal outposts earlier in the day.

"The aggressor enemy, whose very nature is characterized by breaking

commitments and violating agreements, attacked five coastal outposts of the Islamic Republic in the early hours of today under the pretext of responding to the IRGC Navy's confronting a trespassing vessel [in the Strait of Hormuz]," the statement read. The IRGC said maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz falls under Iran's responsibility pursuant to a Pakistan-mediated memorandum of understanding that was recently signed between Iran and the United States.

It added, "Henceforth, vessels found to be in violation will be dealt with more firmly than before." The statement also warned that, "Any future aggression by the enemy, regardless of the pretext and even if, as last night and tonight, it targets objectives deemed to be of minor importance, will be met with a crushing



TASNIM

response." The renewed exchange followed an incident on Friday in which the IRGC fired warning shots at a vessel that had ignored warnings against using an unauthorized route through the Strait of Hormuz.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) subsequently reported strikes against military targets in Iran. American forces have repeatedly violated a ceasefire reached between the two countries in order to give a chance to diploma-

cy to end the unprovoked US-Israeli military aggression against Iran. Iran's Foreign Ministry in a statement on Sunday strongly condemned the US new strikes, saying that the attacks are a clear violation of Article 2, Paragraph 4 of the United Nations Charter, as well as a flagrant breach of Article 1 of the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between Iran and the US.

"These attacks show that the US regime does not place the slightest value or credibility on its commitments, and that breaking promises is part of this regime's nature," it added.

The statement further stressed Iran's determination to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity against US military aggression, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Iran demands clear timetable for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon

International Desk

Iran called for the establishment of a clear timetable for Israel's withdrawal from occupied areas of Lebanon after Lebanon and Israel signed a US-mediated agreement to end the regime's attacks on the Arab country.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei made the remarks on Sunday in response to questions about the agreement between Israel and Leba-

non, as well as the implementation of the first provision of the Iran-US Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on ending the war in Lebanon.

Baqaei reiterated Iran's longstanding position on Lebanon's sovereignty, saying Tehran considers the protection of Lebanon's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, along with safeguarding the dignity and security of all Lebanese citizens, to be a fundamental prerequisite for any sustain-

able agreement aimed at ending the war and Israel's military presence in the country.

The Iranian spokesman stated that the full implementation of the first provision of the memorandum - which calls for ending Israeli attacks against Lebanon and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied Lebanese territories - is essential for reaching a final and lasting agreement capable of restoring stability to the region.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Kazakhstan signs \$25m logistics deal at Shahid Rajaei Port

First foreign direct investment in Iranian ports for INSTC development

Economy Desk

Kazakhstan signed a \$25 million investment agreement to build a logistics hub at Iran's Shahid Rajaei Port, in a move Iranian officials hailed as a major step toward attracting foreign investment and developing the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

The 27-year contract, which includes two years of construction and 25 years of operation, marks the first 100% foreign direct investment in an Iranian port in recent years, according to Hormozgan province ports and maritime chief Hossein Abbasnejad. The 15-hectare logistics center is expected to handle annual transshipment of 1.5 million metric tons of goods once operational, Abbasnejad told IRNA ahead of Sunday's signing ceremony.

Mohammad Shakibi-Nasab, head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization, said the project was backed by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and aligned with the agency's strategy to strengthen Iran's transit position.

"This investment, in addition to developing infrastructure and pro-

viding port equipment, will create jobs, increase the operational capacity of Shahid Rajaei Port and boost ports along the North-South corridor," Shakibi-Nasab said. He added that the agreement guarantees annual transit of 1.5 million tons of goods through Iranian territory, which would improve Iran's share of the regional transit market and raise transit revenues.

Kazakhstan's strategic role in regional transport

Shakibi-Nasab described Kazakhstan as a key logistics and transit hub in the region that could play an effective role in activating the North-South corridor. He said Kazakh investment in both infrastructure and equipment at the southern port would boost the international corridor and expand bilateral economic ties.

The official also emphasized the project's social impact, saying it would create new employment opportunities and increase productivity at ports along the corridor.

Bilateral trade set to triple

Aman Malgazhdarov, director of the QazExportPromotion Corporate Fund, expressed satisfaction with the signing and described the



project as a strategic step in economic and transport development between the two countries.

"We have been working continuously on this project for nearly a year, and today we are pleased to see this agreement signed," Gazhavarov said.

He stressed that the project was not merely a berth, warehouse or

terminal, but rather the "core of a future Kazakh port within Shahid Rajaei Port" that could play a significant role in developing regional transit corridors.

Gazhavarov noted that current bilateral trade between Iran and Kazakhstan stands at approximately \$400 million. He expressed hope that the agreement and the oper-

ation of the logistics center would increase that figure by at least two to three times.

First wholly foreign-owned port investment

Abbasnejad, the local ports director, said the facility would function as part of a chain of logistics centers linking Kazakhstan, Shahid Rajaei

Port and origin ports, with the goal of expanding cargo transit.

The contract includes provisions for review every five years to account for potential increases in transit volumes and changing conditions, he said.

The investment covers building construction, warehouses, site preparation and specialized equipment for port operations.

The deal follows the finalization of 14 memoranda of understanding during Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd's recent visit to Kazakhstan. Those agreements were originally signed during President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Astana last year.

Sadeq Malvajerd and Kazakh officials sealed the pacts to expand transit cooperation and activate logistics hubs at key ports in both countries, aiming to capitalize on Iran's role as a gateway for cargo moving from China to Europe while providing Kazakhstan with access to open waters.

According to Sadeq Malvajerd, another major focus of her mid-June visit was identifying locations for logistics hubs to store and redistribute goods along transit routes in both Kazakhstan and Iran.

Pakistan eases Iran trade with Taftan railway customs designation

Economy Desk

Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has officially designated the Taftan border railway station as a land customs station for handling import and export procedures, a move expected to facilitate cross-border trade with Iran.

The decision follows a telephone conversation between the head of Iran's railway company and his Pakistani counterpart, as well as subsequent correspondence with Pakistan Railways on activating the Taftan crossing, IRNA reported.

Under an official notification issued by the FBR, Taftan railway station, located on an 11.75-hectare site, will operate as a land customs station for the loading, unloading, clearance and customs processing of imported and exported goods.

The notification also defines the geographical boundaries of the facility, formally integrating the Taftan rail terminal into Pakistan's customs network. Taftan, Pakistan's main land crossing on the border with Iran, has long held strategic importance but has operated below its full potential in recent years because of infrastructure constraints and the lack of comprehensive customs facilities.

Experts say the formal launch of a rail customs of-



ice at the site will facilitate the movement of goods by rail while helping reduce transportation costs, speed up customs clearance and improve the management of border trade.

Other objectives of the measure include curbing the use of unofficial trade routes and smuggling, integrating documentation, inspection and customs clearance procedures, and reducing reliance on informal trade channels.

The decision comes as Iran and Pakistan have long discussed boosting bilateral trade, but progress has been constrained by international sanctions on Tehran, weak banking links and logistical barriers. The Islamic Republic is focusing on removing infrastructure bottlenecks, expanding border trade and activating barter mechanisms as part of a roadmap to increase bilateral trade with Pakistan to \$10 billion.

Achieving this target, however, remains challenging. Bilateral trade between

Iran and Pakistan was estimated at roughly \$2.8 billion in the fiscal year ending June 2025, according to Pakistani media reports citing official data — though some Iranian sources place the figure closer to \$3.1 billion for the overlapping Iranian calendar year, reflecting minor discrepancies in national accounting methods.

Economic analysts believe that directly linking rail infrastructure with customs services will improve the efficiency of the transport chain, facilitate the movement of bulk commodities, including agricultural products, minerals and petroleum products, and expand the capacity of formal trade between the two countries. Observers say the designation of Taftan railway station as a land customs station forms part of Pakistan's broader policy of expanding legal trade with Iran and making greater use of rail transport capacity along the two countries' shared border.

Parallel Hormuz ...

Put simply, those promoting such arrangements are driving the region toward greater instability, complexity and confrontation. Rather than easing tensions, they are effectively escalating them.

Geopolitically, these measures are intended to weaken Iran's strategic standing as one of the key and influential players in regional affairs. Under such circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran considers itself fully entitled to defend its legitimate rights with utmost vigilance and without the slightest negligence, while ensuring that no foreign power or parallel arrangement is allowed to disregard Iran's historic and legal role in managing this vital waterway.

What factors have prompted some regional countries and extra-regional powers to pursue new arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz? To what extent are these initiatives driven by security concerns, and how much are they aimed at achieving political objectives?

Available evidence suggests that US pressure on Oman over the management of the Strait of Hormuz has not only fueled the recent incidents but has also deepened the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust across the Persian Gulf region. These pressures are not merely an attempt to violate Iran's sovereignty and circumvent the provisions of the Islamabad Memorandum; they also reflect Washington's double-standard, interventionist and illegitimate

approach to regional affairs. These policies are being pursued at a time when Oman, as one of the two coastal states bordering the Strait, finds itself in a difficult and multilayered position — balancing its international commitments, its strategic relationship with the United States, and its neighboring ties with Iran — effectively leaving Muscat caught between competing pressures.

With a clear understanding of the conspiratorial nature of the US-Israeli approach in the region, the miscalculations of certain other actors, and the reality that Oman, despite being a trusted partner, cannot fully withstand comprehensive US pressure, the Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted a smart, proactive and preemptive strategy. The first step in this strategy was the establishment of a joint working group with Oman under Article 5 of the memorandum of understanding, aimed at resolving misunderstandings and fostering a shared understanding of the legal framework governing the Strait.

In the subsequent stages, while remaining committed to its legal principles and international obligations, the Islamic Republic of Iran will roll out new political and security measures to safeguard its national interests, prevent any unilateral or parallel action that could undermine its sovereignty and national security, and consolidate the order it seeks to uphold in this vital waterway.

To what extent could the dispute over the management of security in the

Strait of Hormuz cast a shadow over the course of Iran-US negotiations?

The dispute over the management of the Strait of Hormuz goes beyond merely casting a shadow over negotiations; it could become one of the principal factors leading to the collapse of the Islamabad Memorandum between Tehran and Washington.

As recent incidents have clearly demonstrated, the disagreement has created a highly chaotic and dangerous environment in the Strait of Hormuz. Two competing shipping routes have now emerged, leaving shipping companies caught between fears of US sanctions on the one hand and the prospect of facing Iran's security measures in its territorial waters on the other.

Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasize that Washington's disingenuous policy of pressuring Oman to establish an alternative corridor, coupled with its recent military attacks against Iranian interests, is not merely a reaction to current developments. Rather, it forms part of a concealed, long-term strategy designed to lay the groundwork for more hostile actions against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Tehran, however, with full awareness of the hidden dimensions and underlying objectives of US conduct, has effectively neutralized this strategy. Not only have these pressures backfired, but Iran, by adopting measured and intelligent responses, has further strengthened its strategic position in this

vital waterway and demonstrated that it will stand firmly and wisely against any interventionist action.

How should the recent threats by the US president, suggesting that the United States may be forced to finish the job militarily, be assessed? Are they part of psychological warfare and deterrence, or should the possibility of an escalation and even a return to a broader war be taken seriously?

The recent threats by the US president should be viewed as a multilayered and complex phenomenon. While they reveal Washington's concealed, long-term and deceptive intentions within the framework of the Islamabad Memorandum with Iran, in the short term they are more appropriately understood as part of psychological warfare, deterrence and an attempt by Washington to test Tehran's resolve.

What lies behind these threatening statements, however, is nothing other than America's strategic failure in the war and a desperate attempt to break out of the deadlock that has emerged in its confrontation with Iran.

Still, the possibility of a broader military confrontation remains a serious and plausible scenario. Under such circumstances, the Islamic Republic of Iran, fully aware of the unpredictable nature of US behavior and drawing on the experience of the two recent wars, has prepared itself for any escalation of tensions or military confrontation.

Starmmerism in era of strongman foreign policy



By Robbie Duff

Researcher

OPINION

Keir Starmer came to office in July 2024, looking to restore British credibility with allies and project the image of a Britain that plays by the rules. He didn't anticipate a world in which the most powerful actor discards them entirely.

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched coordinated strikes on Iran, assassinating its Leader, Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and targeting Iran's nuclear and missile infrastructure. Within days, fighting broke out between Hezbollah and Israel for the first time in 15 months, with the latter invading southern Lebanon. A regional war was underway and Britain was nowhere.

A deliberate distance, and its costs

Starmer's initial response was calculated. He confirmed Britain had played no role in the strikes on Iran, describing the decision as deliberate. He declined to oppose strikes but stopped short of endorsement. In a joint statement with France and Germany, he condemned Iranian counterstrikes and called for a return to diplomacy, without offering any criticism of the US-Israeli action that triggered them. This ambiguity did not hold for long. By March 1, Starmer had granted the United States permission to use British bases for what he described as a "specific and limited defensive purpose". One hour after the announcement, RAF Akrotiri's runway was struck by an Iranian drone. The distinction between offensive and defensive operations, the central pillar of Starmer's political positioning, was collapsing.

Fifty-nine percent of UK voters opposed the Iran conflict, and Starmer's refusal to commit British forces to offensive operations reflected public sentiment (Chatham House 2026). Despite the calls from the Leader of the Conservatives Kemi Badenoch and the Leader of Reform UK Nigel Farage to involve UK forces, he stood fast in his initial assessment, aligning himself more closely with his European peers. But that same standpoint constrained his ability to offer Washington the fuller cooperation that might have bought him influence. Trump expressed displeasure, publicly comparing Starmer unfavourably to Neville Chamberlain and sharing satirical videos mocking him.

Lebanon: from joint statements to 'wrong'

The Lebanon dimension has been more revealing still. When Israel launched its ground invasion on March 16, the UK joined other governments in a joint statement urging restraint. Israeli forces continued to advance. By early April, more than 1,200 people had been killed and over a million displaced (Al Jazeera 2026). Then came April 8, "Black Wednesday", when Israel launched what it described as its most powerful strikes of the war, hours after the US-Iran cease-fire was announced. In a 10-minute assault, Israeli jets struck more than 150 locations simultaneously, killing at least 303 people in central Beirut's residential and commercial areas. UN experts condemned the attacks as a "blatant violation of the UN Charter" (OHCHR 2026).

The strikes forced a shift in Starmer's language. On a Persian Gulf tour spanning Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar, he told ITV's Talking Politics podcast that



Israel was "wrong" to continue striking Lebanon: "That shouldn't be happening. That should stop," (ITV News, 2026).

The strongman problem

The deeper challenge facing Starmer is one that no amount of diplomatic dexterity can fully resolve. The actors shaping the current international order do not operate within the framework that British foreign policy assumes. Trump launched a war without consulting allies and has since publicly derided European leaders who expressed reservations. Netanyahu appears to be pursuing annexationist objectives in Lebanon that governments have opposed but lack the power to stop. Both Trump and Netanyahu have demonstrated that the reputational costs of unilateral action, the primary constraint in the rules-based order Starmer invokes, have ceased to function as effective deterrents.

Starmer's foreign policy is built on the premise that Britain's value lies in its capacity to act as a credible and principled intermediary: a country that upholds international law and can shape outcomes through persuasion rather than coercion. The Persian Gulf tour, the "wrong" remarks, and the calls for

Lebanon's inclusion in the cease-fire are consistent with that premise. But the gap between the language Starmer uses and the outcomes he can deliver has been visible throughout.

If Starmer wanted his foreign policy to be more than diplomatic discussion, it must have been backed by real leverage. The scale of what Israel has inflicted on Lebanon demands that Britain move beyond statements. Since the fighting began on March 2, more than 3,000 people have been killed in Israeli strikes, including 292 women and 211 children. More than one million people (over a fifth of Lebanon's population) have been displaced, many sheltering in collective sites, sleeping in cars, or on the streets. Six hospitals have been closed and 15 damaged, coupled with 147 attacks on health-care workers have been recorded. These are not the incidental costs of a military campaign against Hezbollah; they are the signature of a war waged with clear disregard for civilian life, echoing the pattern already documented in Gaza. Britain has condemned both. It has changed neither. That must now change through action. At minimum, the government should establish a formal parliamentary mech-

anism for approving base access by allied powers, closing the accountability gap that allowed Britain to be embedded in the Iran war without a Commons vote. On Lebanon, Britain should move from condemnation to conditional action. That means suspending all remaining arms export licences to Israel, not merely the partial approach adopted so far, under which only around 30 of 350 licences have been paused while new ones quietly continue to be granted. It means closing the F-35 carve-out, which exempts components for fighter jets used in active operations from the suspension regime. And it means introducing mandatory end-use verification, replacing the current system of unenforceable declarations with independent monitoring of where British military exports actually go. These are not radical measures. They are the minimum required to ensure that British arms are not complicit in the very violations Britain says it opposes. The era of strongman foreign policy does not reward careful positioning. It rewards leverage. And the moment to deploy it is almost gone.

The article was first published by the *Atlas Institute for International Affairs*.



The illustration shows the resigned prime minister of the UK Keir Starmer along with military jets, warships, and a map of Iran.

THE TIMES



The actors shaping the current international order do not operate within the framework that British foreign policy assumes. Trump launched a war without consulting allies and has since publicly derided European leaders who expressed reservations. Netanyahu appears to be pursuing annexationist objectives in Lebanon that governments have opposed but lack the power to stop. Both Trump and Netanyahu have demonstrated that the reputational costs of unilateral action, the primary constraint in the rules-based order Starmer invokes, have ceased to function as effective deterrents.



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer delivers his resignation speech outside No. 10 Downing St. in London, UK, on June 22, 2026.

ADRIAN DENNIS/AFP

Britain's next prime minister faces deep foreign policy challenges

Whether Burnham or another



By Olivia O'Sullivan

Director of the UK in the World Programme at Chatham House

OPINION

The UK will have a new prime minister after Keir Starmer resigned last Monday. Andy Burnham, who has returned as a Labour MP after securing a strong victory in the Makerfield by-election, announced his leadership bid the same day.

Given that Wes Streeting — the main expected challenger to Burnham — has announced his support for Burnham's leadership bid, it now seems highly likely that Burnham will become the next prime minister. If standing unopposed, Burnham would enter office by mid-July; if there is a leadership contest, whoever wins will be in place by September.

Much of the debate around how Burnham, or other potential challengers, may differ from Starmer has focused on their approach to pressing domestic issues, especially the cost of living and growth, public services and immigration. Future relations with the EU have made the occasional appearance.

These issues are crucial. But Starmer's short time as prime minister was largely consumed by foreign affairs. Any potential new prime minister will face a relentless deluge of international issues and challenges.

This is not just the result of unexpected overseas crises, although there have been many of those. It is tied to the fact that the UK's most critical post-war relationships — with the US and Europe — are shifting. There are positive lessons to take from Starmer's track record in government. But his government struggled to address the deeper strategic questions — and find the resources — needed to tackle this fundamental shift and its impact on defence and security.

Whoever is the next prime minister will have the opportunity for a reset. This would need to address the US's increasing reluctance to underwrite European security, the intensification of US-China rivalry, and the resulting increase in threats facing the UK.

What Starmer did well

Starmer was consistent and reliable when it comes to personal diplomacy. He navigated a difficult relationship with President Donald Trump by correctly reading, and managing, the MAGA camp's extreme sensitivity to apparent European condescension. He refused to be publicly baited into conflict with the administration if it didn't serve the UK's interests.

As pieces of diplomatic theatre, reciprocal US-UK state visits have been handled well. And Starmer sought to learn from the past, carefully delimiting the UK's role in the US-Iran war in recognition of the lessons of Iraq — and the subsequent Chilcot Inquiry — about not committing limited UK resources to US missions with no clear strategic end goal.

Starmer had also been a credible European ally. He continued the approach of previous UK governments in being a long-term and clear-eyed supporter of Ukraine. He recognized that the UK's security priority should be in Europe and coordinated with European counterparts effectively, signing a new security treaty with Germany and refreshing the existing one with France.

A longer-term plan for European defence and security

While Starmer's personal diplomacy as a European ally was a relative success, it is at threat of being undermined by the failure of his government to reckon with the costs of rising defence and security commitments.



Andy Burnham speaks as he celebrates his victory in the Makerfield by-election, at Ashton Town Football Club, UK, on June 19, 2026.

● RYAN JENKINSON/GETTY IMAGES

Defence spending challenges are by no means a new phenomenon, and are shared across Europe. Previous UK governments similarly said they would hit ambitious defence spending targets without explaining how. Part of the difficulty for Starmer's government had been untangling a long history of British governments making too many commitments for UK defence without an honest assessment of the total costs.

But the defence spending issue is about more than just litigating competing claims on the public purse — though this is challenging enough. With the US no longer such a reliable European security backstop — and Washington planning to withdraw some resources from Europe — the UK needs a longer-term defence and security relationship with European allies.

The UK's active and immediate response to Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine in 2022 increased Britain's credibility as a contributor to, and shaper of, the future of European security. The UK sent weaponry and helped train Ukrainian forces, in some cases before other partners, and played an important role in coordinating support. It worked closely with Nordic and Baltic countries, particularly via the Joint Expeditionary Force, to build an increasingly active European defence coalition. Post-Brexit, the UK has made it clear that it can play an important strategic and security role in Europe.

But the UK's failure to credibly modernize and update its own defence capabilities could now undermine this role. The UK's defence policy has been dysfunctional

across several governments and has not truly grappled with the major shift required as the US withdraws resources and demands higher defence spending from its NATO allies.

Starmer's reset with the European Union kicked off with a UK-EU summit in May 2025. It included a new Security and Defence Partnership intended to underpin closer security coordination with the EU. But while some progress has been made, it ran aground when talks broke down in November over UK access to the EU's SAFE programme, which provides access to jointly backed loans to finance collaborative defence procurement. This was a setback.

Whoever is UK prime minister next needs to focus on creative long-term solutions to collective defence funding with the EU, and should therefore view gaining access to SAFE, or any future iteration, as the first step in a wider effort to allow European countries to finance military capabilities together. This is not just for the sake of giving the UK a role, but because collective European defence is critical, especially without reliable US support and with fewer US resources.

US-China rivalry

The US's changing role has wider implications for UK foreign policy beyond defence. Intensifying US-China competition has created a more adversarial trade environment, with Washington and Beijing willing to impose export controls and tariffs to influence and coerce others. Starmer's government was right to have

begun considering how to respond credibly to potential economic coercion. It has also wisely sought to build deeper trade and strategic relationships with other countries concerned about the US-China rivalry and the two countries' manipulation of and control over technology infrastructure and supply chains. A good example is the recently announced UK-Japan Frontier Technology Partnership.

But to successfully manage the challenges emerging from US-China rivalry requires a more sustained effort in government and a clearer understanding of the ways trade and security issues interlink. This is difficult given the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is currently mired in a significant restructuring. There is also a persistent shortage of deep China expertise across government, as the country's influence becomes relevant to trade, growth and security more widely. A good start would be to have a clearer strategy for the FCDO itself, linked to the need to build new middle power relationships and closer links between economic and foreign policy amid US-China rivalry.

Above all, the public deserves a clearer explanation of the changing international environment. The consequences of these shifts affect defence spending, security and trade policy, shaping the choices available to the UK. Explaining these realities honestly is a necessary part of preparing the country for a different strategic era and should be first on any new prime minister's list.

The article was first published by Chatham House.



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Keir Starmer (C), flanked by the European Council president António Costa (L) and president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, poses for a photo onboard HMS Sutherland frigate in central London after the UK-EU summit.

● STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA



Sports Desk

Iran's bid for a historic place in the World Cup knockout stage ended in vain despite an unbeaten run in Group G after Austria and Algeria played to a dramatic 3-3 draw on the final day of the group phase.

Austria, which had led twice, appeared to be heading out when Riyad Mahrez scored his second goal of the game to put Algeria 3-2 ahead in the 93rd minute.

At that point, Iran was on course to qualify as one of the eight best third-placed teams.

But Sasa Kalajdzic headed home a 96th-minute equalizer – literally the last touch of the ball in the group stage – to secure a point in the Group J meeting in Kansas City as both sides advanced to the round of 32.

Iran, meanwhile, which had a late winner ruled out by VAR for a marginal offside in Friday's 1-1 draw with Egypt, was left to rue stoppage-time heartbreak once again, joining South Korea, Scotland and Uruguay in crashing out of the expanded 48-team tournament.

Three draws in as many games had seen Team Melli finish behind Belgium and Egypt in the group table, leaving head coach Amir Qalenoee and his players reliant on favorable results elsewhere to secure a historic knockout-stage berth.

The anxious seven-hour wait at Iran's World Cup camp in Tijuana began with the Group L clash between Croatia and Ghana, whose head coach, Carlos Queiroz, previously managed Iran, in Philadelphia.

A victory for the African side would have sent Iran through, but the Portuguese coach, who failed to lead Team Melli to the knockout stage at the previous three World Cups, did little to help his former employers' cause as Ni-

FIFA World Cup: Late heartbreak sends unbeaten Iran packing



Iran's Mahdi Taremi is dejected after the World Cup Group G game against Egypt in Seattle, Washington, U.S., on June 26, 2026.
● LINDSEY WASSON/AP

kola Vlastic's 83rd-minute header secured a 2-1 win for the Europeans, who had trailed Iran on goal difference in the third-placed teams table before kickoff.

Next came the Group K clash between DR Congo and Uzbekistan, with DR Congo needing all three points to overtake Iran.

Uzbekistan, which had nothing to play for after back-to-back defeats, appeared to have done its fellow Central Asian side a huge favor after Eldor Shomurodov opened the scoring in the 10th minute. But DR Congo staged a late comeback to win 3-1 and finish third in the group with four points.

Although Austria and Algeria entered their match knowing a draw would send both teams through, there was little sign of a repeat of the 'Disgrace of Gijón.'

In that infamous match at the 1982 World Cup in Spain, West Germany beat Austria 1-0 in a group-stage game in which both teams simply went through the motions, knowing that result would send them both through at Algeria's expense.

This time, however, the match was played in the right spirit throughout, with the intensity only easing in the closing minutes before a chaotic period of stoppage time.

The final whistle at Arrowhead Stadium marked one last painful moment for Iran, which missed out on the round of 32 by a single place, in a World Cup campaign overshadowed by a politically charged buildup amid the country's conflict with co-host United States.

Throughout the tournament, Qalenoee and his players complained of numerous logistical problems, including travel restrictions, visa denials for support staff and hurried departures from the United States after matches.

Speaking to reporters after Iran's final group game, captain Mahdi Taremi described the tournament

as a logistical "disaster" and called on world governing body FIFA to resolve the situation.

"FIFA, they have to solve every problem here but unfortunately they couldn't stop, since the beginning," said the Iranian talisman, adding that FIFA President Gianni Infantino had visited the Iran dressing room after their opening game and told the team: "It's just the beginning." Yet, "the group stage finishes tomorrow and we don't have our logistics people here."

Taremi also argued that Iran's presence at the tournament was no longer welcome, asking: "Who wants to help us? Who? If they

want us to be out – OK, let's (be) out, let's get out. But that's not fair."

Qalenoee, meanwhile, who previously described Iran as the "most oppressed" team at the World Cup, urged FIFA "not to let the hosts treat teams and players the same way in the future. I hope Mr. Infantino will actually stand up to such behavior."

After its elimination was confirmed, the team released a statement expressing its "heartfelt appreciation to the wonderful people of Mexico, especially the beautiful city of Tijuana."

"Leaving Tijuana is truly difficult for all of us," the statement said.



Iran's Diana Rahimi (3rd) poses with her women's 60kg gold medal at the SCO Member States Wushu Sanda Championships in Anlu, China, on June 28, 2026.
● iranwushufed.ir

Iranians win four golds at SCO sanda tournament

Sports Desk

Iran's national sanda squad enjoyed a successful campaign at the SCO Member States Wushu Sanda Championships in Anlu, China, winning four gold and four silver medals across the men's and women's events.

Diana Rahimi claimed Iran's only women's gold, defeating her Indian opponent 2-0 in the 60kg final. She had reached the title bout by overcoming a Kazakh rival who had previously finished

third at the World Junior Championships.

The Iranian men's team added three more titles. Mahdi Kermani captured the 60kg gold with a straight-round victory over his Uzbek opponent after earlier defeating rivals from Cambodia and Kyrgyzstan. Sohail Mousavi secured the 75kg title after his Indian opponent, the Asian silver medalist, was disqualified in the opening round of the final. Reza Karami completed Iran's gold-medal haul by beat-

ing his Macau rival in two rounds to win the 80kg division.

Sogand Sinkaei, meanwhile, finished runner-up in the women's 52kg division after losing to a Chinese opponent in the final, having previously defeated rivals from Macau and India. Sogand Salimi also settled for silver in the women's 56kg category despite winning the opening round of her final against a Chinese opponent. She had advanced after her Kazakh

rival was disqualified in the semifinals.

In the men's events, Shoja Panahi claimed silver in the 65kg division after falling to a Chinese opponent in the final, while Erfan Moharrami also took silver in the 70kg class following a loss to another Chinese rival.

The two-day tournament featured athletes from China, Iran, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Macau, Cambodia and India.

Iran eyes another win against Syria in FIBA World Cup qualifier

Sports Desk

Iran's national basketball team will face Syria today in a rescheduled 2027 FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifier, aiming to strengthen its path toward the next round and extend its dominant record against its regional rival. The Group C encounter, originally scheduled for March 1 in Beirut, was postponed by four months after FIBA suspended several fixtures due to regional security concerns. The game will now be played just days before the start of the third qualification win-

dow, which begins on Thursday and features 16 Asian teams divided into four groups.

Iran enters the delayed fixture with two wins and one defeat from its opening three qualifying matches. The national team opened its campaign with back-to-back victories over Iraq, winning 94-68 and 86-71 in the first window, before suffering a 73-60 loss to Jordan in its opening game of the second window in February.

Those results leave Iran second in Group C with five points, one behind unbeaten Jordan, which

is on a perfect three-win run. Jordan will also play its postponed second-window game against Iraq today.

Although a victory over Syria may not immediately lift Iran to the top of the table, it would significantly strengthen the team's position in the race for qualification to next year's global showpiece in Qatar and provide valuable momentum ahead of the third window.

History also favors the Iranian side. Ranked 28th in the latest FIBA world rankings, Iran sits well ahead of Syria, which is ranked 74th. Iran has

won eight of the previous nine meetings between the two teams, including a commanding 82-43 victory in their most recent encounter during the group stage of the 2025 FIBA Asia Cup.

Syria, meanwhile, has struggled for consistency in recent international competition. The team has managed just one victory in its last five matches, which came against Iraq during the second qualifying window. Its other four games ended in defeats to Guam, Jordan twice, and Iran.

The Syrians will look to challenge Iran with the

help of naturalized American guard Donte McGill, who chipped in 34 points in his team's victory over Iraq. Nevertheless, Iran will enter the contest as the clear favorite, seeking another convincing result against a familiar opponent and an important step toward World Cup qualification.

Iran will take on Jordan in a crunch fixture on July 2, before concluding the first-round group phase against Syria in Amman three days later.

The top three in each of the four groups will progress to the second round of the qualifiers.



Kolgah Zarrin excavations offer new insights into ancient Elymais Civilization

Iranica Desk

Archaeologists leading excavations at the historic Kolgah Zarrin site in Masjed Soleyman, Khuzestan Province, have underscored the site's importance for understanding the ancient Elymais Kingdom, urging continued research, sustainable conservation measures, and greater investment in cultural tourism. Speaking to CHTN, excavation director Ali Hozhabri said potential discoveries of architectural remains, rock reliefs, and petroglyphs could shed new light on the political, economic, social, and cultural foundations of the Elymaean state. "Rock reliefs are valuable not only for archaeology but also for understanding social organization, power structures, and cultural practices in ancient societies," Hozhabri said, noting that such studies can contribute to research in history, sociology, and anthropology. Archaeologist Ayoub Sol-

tani, another member of the excavation team, said social structures in ancient societies were shaped by relationships among individuals, groups, and social classes. Examining these structures through political, economic, social, and cultural perspectives can provide a deeper understanding of historical communities, he added. Soltani described Elymais as a powerful semi-independent kingdom that emerged in southwestern Iran during the Parthian era following the rise of the Seleucids. At its height, the kingdom controlled territories across present-day Khuzestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Lorestan, Ilam, and parts of Isfahan Province. According to the archaeologists, independent coinage, control of key routes linking Iran to Mesopotamia, maritime trade in the Persian Gulf, and a strong agricultural economy formed the basis of Elymais' prosper-



● chtn.ir

ity. The discovery of Elymaean coins in northern parts of the Arabian Peninsula further illustrates the kingdom's extensive commercial reach and strategic role in regional trade networks. The researchers identified Masjed Soleyman, along-

side Izeh, as one of the principal political and religious centers of Elymais. They pointed to the construction of ancient Iran's largest stone terrace, as well as numerous temples and ceremonial complexes, as evidence of the city's prominence.

Hozhabri and Soltani noted that the Kolgah Zarrin temple, which features motifs associated with Mithraic beliefs, may reflect the religious diversity and tolerance of Elymaean society. Beyond the discovery of sculpted busts, coins, and rock reliefs, the archaeol-

ogists stressed the importance of studying the site's architecture and pottery. Continued excavations, supported by adequate conservation measures, could provide unprecedented insights into the history and culture of the period, they said. The archaeologists also welcomed recent efforts by local authorities to develop cultural tourism around Kolgah Zarrin. Establishing a site museum, they argued, could increase visitor numbers, extend tourist stays, and contribute to the local economy. They emphasized that sustainable preservation depends on the active participation of local communities, private-sector stakeholders, and civil society organizations. Local NGOs, they said, can play an important role in strengthening social capital, attracting investment, and protecting both the tangible and intangible heritage of the region. The researchers further

suggested that institutions such as the oil industry and municipal authorities could contribute to the preservation and promotion of Masjed Soleyman's cultural heritage through their social responsibility programs. Among the main challenges facing urban archaeological sites, they cited conflicts with private landowners, urban development projects, and insufficient long-term monitoring. Raising public awareness, engaging local communities, strategic land acquisition, and strengthening heritage protection laws were identified as key measures for safeguarding these sites. Concluding their remarks, Hozhabri and Soltani said urban archaeological excavations not only help rescue endangered heritage but also deepen understanding of past civilizations while promoting a balance between urban development and the preservation of historical identity.

Isfahan tourism sector faces ongoing challenges



● IRNA

Iranica Desk

The head of the Isfahan Association of Travel and Tourism Service Offices said the tourism market has yet to recover satisfactorily, with a combination of economic challenges, flight restrictions, and lingering social concerns continuing to suppress travel demand. In an interview with IRNA, Hossein Nasri outlined the factors behind the current downturn in the tourism sector, stating that one of the main reasons for declining travel demand is the financial pressure on households, coupled with significant increases in public transportation fares. Citing the example of rail travel, Nasri said ticket prices on heavily traveled routes such as Mashhad have risen to the point where round-trip travel for a family of four has become extremely costly. As a result, many citizens can no longer afford air or rail travel to more distant destinations.

Nasri also addressed the state of the aviation sector, noting that not all flight capacities have yet returned to service, particularly on domestic tourism routes such as Kish Island. He emphasized that a return to normal conditions following recent tensions will take time, describing tourism as a highly sensitive industry. Unlike some sectors that can quickly resume normal operations once a crisis subsides, the recovery of tourism depends on the reopening of airports, the restoration of flight services, and the resumption of visa-related operations at embassies — a process that is progressing gradually. The head of Isfahan's travel agencies association added that public uncertainty stemming from concerns about wartime conditions has also contributed to reduced willingness to travel. Despite the current challenges, Nasri expressed optimism about the near future, saying there are encouraging signs

that domestic and international airlines are preparing to resume services. Efforts are also underway to reopen visa service offices, developments that could help gradually revive the tourism industry in the coming months. He noted that short-duration and weekend trips, which generally rely less on air travel and are often undertaken by private vehicle or overland transportation, are currently performing better than large-scale domestic and international tour packages. While Tehran had entered serious negotiations with Washington, the United States and Israel launched attacks on multiple locations across Iran on February 28, 2026. The attacks continued in Tehran and several other cities, including Isfahan, until a ceasefire was announced in the early hours of April 8, 2026. After Tehran, Isfahan Province was reported to have been among the regions most heavily affected by the attacks.

War-damaged heritage sites in Kurdistan Province undergoing restoration

Iranica Desk

Emergency restoration and protection work on historic monuments damaged during the recent US and Israel's war against Iran, including the Khosroabad Mansion and the Kurd House, has been completed, according to provincial cultural heritage officials. Ali Behnia, Deputy Head of Kurdistan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, announced that archaeological sites across the province suffered no significant damage during the conflict, and no noticeable increase in illegal excavations was reported. Speaking to ISNA about the post-war condition of the province's historical assets, Behnia said that activities have largely returned to normal. He noted that Khosroabad Mansion, the Kurd House, and the Moshir Divan Mansion were among the sites damaged during the war and are currently undergoing restoration. "Necessary emergency measures were carried out for all affected sites, and follow-up actions are underway at the ministry level," Behnia said. "We hope that once the required funding is secured, comprehensive restoration of the damaged sections can begin as soon as possible." According to Behnia, the damage included both structural and decorative elements, and

authorities are working to address the issues in the shortest possible time. Explaining the emergency measures taken, he said that each damaged building received restoration according to its needs. In cases where windows had been shattered or displaced, replacement glass was installed and other urgent repairs were completed.

supplies. Preliminary assessments have been completed, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage is expected to adjust and allocate funding based on current market conditions. Regarding archaeological activities in the province, Behnia stated that no active excavations have been conducted in Kurdistan this year. However, a proposed excavation

damage to cultural heritage. Behnia emphasized the need for preventive measures, arguing that nationwide educational and cultural initiatives are essential to combat illegal excavations. He compared the issue to public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing littering, saying that long-term cultural education is the most



Khosroabad Mansion
● chtn.ir

"These interventions were carried out as emergency restoration measures," he said. "More comprehensive and specialized conservation work will follow once the necessary funding is allocated." Behnia said that estimating the total cost of repairs remains challenging due to ongoing price fluctuations in construction materials, including wood and other essential

project at the Zagros Cemetery is currently under review and may be implemented with the participation of archaeological researchers if approved. Addressing concerns about illegal excavations during and after the war, Behnia noted that archaeological mounds and heritage sites are continually threatened by unauthorized digging, which can cause serious

effective way to achieve lasting results. He added that illegal excavations continue to occur in Kurdistan, as in other provinces of the country. While some offenders are arrested and prosecuted, Behnia argued that Iran's cultural heritage laws require revision and stronger preventive provisions to better protect historical assets from future damage.

Memorial volume unveiling Former FM Kharrazi sought to recast Iran's image abroad

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Sunday that the late Iranian diplomat Kamal Kharrazi devoted much of his career to improving Iran's image internationally and pioneered public diplomacy within the Foreign Ministry, speaking at the unveiling of a memorial volume honoring Kharrazi in Tehran.

"Kamal Kharrazi's foremost concern was correcting Iran's image in the world," Zarif said, recalling decades of working alongside the veteran diplomat. He said Kharrazi helped reconnect Iranian expatriate academics and professionals with their homeland during his tenure in New York and "introduced the Foreign Ministry to public diplomacy, pursuing it with determi-



Senior Iranian officials and diplomats gather on stage holding copies of a memorial volume dedicated to the late diplomat Kamal Kharrazi during an unveiling ceremony in Tehran's Iran Cultural & Press Institute on June 28, 2026.
● ALI MOHAMMADI/ IRAN DAILY

nation." Remembering one of his final meetings with Kharrazi shortly before the recent conflict, Zarif described him as "a mod-

el of integrity and composure" whose quiet demeanor concealed a deep concern for the Iranian people. He also praised Kharrazi's wife, Mansoureh

Raeis Ghasem, saying she shared the same compassion for society. Calling on officials to preserve the legacy of those killed alongside Kharrazi, Zarif urged po-

litical figures to "set political rivalries aside, learn from these martyrs, and care for the people," adding that the sacrifices made should be used to build a better future for the next generation.

The ceremony, hosted by Iran Cultural & Press Institute, brought together senior political, diplomatic and academic figures, including IRNA Managing Director Hossein Jaber Ansari, former First Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi, Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution Secre-

tary Abdolhossein Khosropanah, Persian Language and Literature Academy President Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel, diplomat Sadegh Kharrazi, and Deputy Minister of Culture for Media Affairs Mohammadreza Norouzpour.

Jaber Ansari described Kharrazi as "a symbol of forgotten virtues," citing his restraint, intellectual discipline and modest lifestyle. He said the memorial volume was intended as a small tribute to a statesman who played a formative role in both IRNA and Iran's foreign policy.

Khosropanah highlighted Kharrazi's academic legacy, describing him as a pioneer in integrating cognitive science with the humanities and a driving force behind expanding Iran's scientific diplomacy.

Jahangiri said Kharrazi's "central concern was always the national interest," recalling his pragmatic approach to policymaking and his belief that public trust is built through dialogue rather than propaganda.

Haddad Adel, who knew Kharrazi for seven decades, remembered him as a principled, nonpartisan statesman with the qualities of an accomplished diplomat, adding that he also played a pivotal role in establishing cognitive science as an academic discipline in Iran.

Pezeshkian says improving livelihoods remains government's top priority

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said improving people's livelihoods and repairing damage from the recent war remain his government's top priorities during meetings with senior Shia clerics in the holy city of Qom on Sunday, where discussions centered on post-war recovery, social unity and public welfare.

The president said his administration was working to rebuild areas affected by the recent conflict while maintaining public services and pursuing economic recovery through both domestic initiatives and diplomatic efforts, president.ir reported.

Meeting Grand Ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamedani, Pezeshkian said repairing war-related damage and improving living standards remained at the forefront of the government's agenda, according to a statement from the president's office.

"The government has mobilized all domestic capacities as well as diplomatic avenues to help resolve the country's and people's problems," he said, adding that efforts to restore damaged areas, sustain public services and improve economic conditions would continue.

Nouri Hamedani praised the government's management of domestic markets during the recent conflict, saying people had not faced serious shortages of essential goods despite wartime conditions.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) meets with Grand Ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamedani in the central city of Qom on June 28, 2026.
● president.ir

He also urged support for officials engaged in diplomatic efforts, saying negotiators working to safeguard the country's national interests "should not be undermined or insulted."

The senior cleric called on media outlets to strengthen public confidence by informing citizens about government achievements while avoiding the spread of despair. He added that any future economic opening or easing of sanctions should translate into tangible improvements in people's livelihoods.

In a separate meeting, Grand Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani as the government's responsible pursuit of agreements serving the national interest, while urging continued attention to household livelihoods, market stability and the prices of essential goods. Pezeshkian told Sobhani that alongside economic initiatives, the government was

expanding educational and healthcare equity and promoting neighborhood-based participation through mosques.

"If mosques return to their true place, a significant portion of social issues can be managed," the president said, describing them as community institutions capable of strengthening social capital, supporting vulnerable groups and encouraging civic participation.

Speaking with Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Karimi Jahromi, Pezeshkian said his administration would continue pursuing diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions, expand international cooperation and remove obstacles facing the country, expressing hope that ongoing negotiations would contribute to greater stability and improved living conditions.

Karimi Jahromi stressed the importance of keeping the public informed about the country's realities and

limitations, saying greater transparency, where national interests permit, could strengthen public trust and social solidarity. He also called for stronger efforts to curb inflation and protect purchasing power, while describing "constructive and dignified engagement with the world" as essential to national development and improving public welfare.

During his meeting with Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Saeedi, custodian of the Holy Shrine of Hazrat Masoumeh, Pezeshkian credited national unity and public solidarity with helping the country overcome the recent conflict. He said the government had worked throughout the crisis to ensure uninterrupted public services and minimize disruption to daily life by mobilizing executive agencies across the country.

Saeedi likewise praised the resilience shown by both the public and state institutions during the conflict, saying national unity and social cohesion had frustrated attempts to destabilize the country. He stressed that preserving solidarity remained essential to confronting future challenges and safeguarding national stability.

Minister urges 'ethical guardrails' for AI



Social Desk

Iran's Minister of Science, Research and Technology Hossein Simaei Sarraf said emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, must be developed alongside strong ethical safeguards, as he met Turkey's Minister of National Education Yusuf Tekin on the sidelines of the sixth Turkey Educational Technologies Summit (TETZ), the ministry said.

Simaei Sarraf said rapid technological progress offers unprecedented opportunities for humanity but warned that innovation detached from ethical principles could have serious consequences. He also called for closer academic cooperation between Iran and Turkey through joint research, expanded university partnerships, and broader exchanges of students and faculty members, MSRT reported.

The meeting focused on practical mechanisms to deepen collaboration in higher education, research and technology, including launching joint scientific projects and strengthening institutional links between universities in the two neighboring countries. Simaei Sarraf also extended an official invitation to Tekin to visit Iran and tour the country's universities and research centers to explore new

avenues for scientific cooperation. Tekin opened the meeting by expressing sympathy with the Iranian government and people following the recent attacks on the country. He also criticized what he described as Western double standards on human rights, arguing that the concept had increasingly been used as a political instrument rather than a universal principle.

Echoing that view, the minister said inconsistent international approaches had undermined confidence in the concept of human rights among many Muslims, while stressing that fundamental human rights values are rooted in both Islamic teachings and rational principles.

Referring to recent attacks on educational institutions in Iran, Simaei Sarraf said universities and schools had come under attack despite internationally recognized humanitarian norms governing armed conflicts. He added that hundreds of students, professors and members of Iran's academic community had been killed in the attacks.

The ministers concluded their talks by reaffirming their commitment to expanding scientific and educational cooperation through sustained academic engagement and collaborative research initiatives.