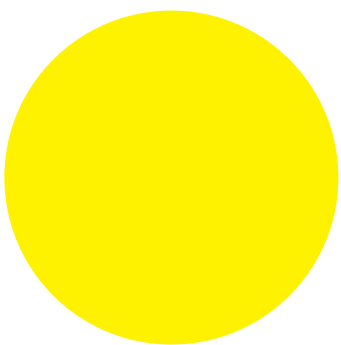


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MPs put forward Hormuz control bill as Parl. convenes after four months



Iranian Parliament holds its first open session in four months in Tehran, Iran on July 14, 2026.

ICANA

Britain's IRGC designation aims to rein in Iran's extraterritorial reach

By Hossein Kazemi
International affairs analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

After years of resisting calls to designate Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization, unlike several other Western countries, Britain has finally placed the force on its list of organizations deemed to pose a threat to national security. The move comes after Iran has come through two wars within the span of a year and continues to face intermittent confrontations—a situation that has created the perception that at least part of the IRGC's capabilities has been tied down, reducing its capacity to operate beyond Iran's borders. Yet London has taken this step not under the Terrorism Act 2000, but through a newly established legal framework.

Hidden calculation

London's decision should be examined one layer beneath the narrative it presents publicly. The official account frames it as a security measure. From a realist perspective, however, what matters is not the justification a government puts forward but the underlying calculation that drives its behavior. And whatever path Britain's reasoning follows in this case, it ultimately converges on a single

objective: containing Iran's extraterritorial capabilities.

To understand the move, one must first understand how London views the IRGC. Britain does not regard the force as a conventional military that can be managed through classical deterrence. In the eyes of British policymakers, the IRGC is a geopolitical lever—the institution through which Tehran projects its power beyond its borders. Put more plainly, the IRGC is the spearhead of Iran's offensive posture; it is the organization that creates and holds up the country's strategic depth, network of allied forces and asymmetric deterrence. When pressure is brought to bear on such an actor, the issue is no longer punishing past behavior; it is about restricting the entire architecture of Iran's regional influence. This is where the core distinction emerges: the difference between "containing behavior" and "denying capability."

Underlying motives

Against that backdrop, three interrelated motives appear to be at work, though they have rarely been stated explicitly. The first is balancing against the growing strategic partnership between Iran and Russia. London has recognized that the IRGC is no longer merely a regional actor; it has become a strategic node linking Eurasian theatres, from Ukraine to the Mediterranean. The force's military-technical cooperation

with Moscow has elevated it from a Middle Eastern player to a component of the broader Euro-Asian balance of power. Britain's decision should therefore be read as sending two messages simultaneously: one to Tehran and another to Moscow—that linking these theatres comes at a cost. That is precisely how balance-of-power politics operates: pressure on one link sends a signal across the entire chain.

The second motive is to blunt that very spearhead. If the IRGC represents the cutting edge of Iran's offensive capability, then targeting its institutional and legal standing is an attempt to dull that edge. London is not seeking to undermine Iran's entire defense establishment; rather, it is seeking to constrain the element that enables strategic initiative, proxy activity and transnational security networking. This reflects a strategy of denying capability rather than punishment for a specific outcome.

The third motive, perhaps the most decisive, is the logic of a window of opportunity. What pushed London from years of hesitation to a more assertive policy was the perception that the IRGC had sustained setbacks during recent military confrontations and that its deterrent posture had, at least in the eyes of its adversaries, been eroded in certain areas. States often gravitate toward opportunism during such transitional moments in the balance of power. When they perceive an opponent as relatively more vulnerable, they

seek to lock in their advantage by institutionalizing pressure and making it difficult to reverse. Britain's decision should therefore be viewed as an attempt to transform what it sees as a temporary weakness into a lasting structural constraint.

New legal framework

This is where the legal nuance becomes significant. Britain deliberately chose not to invoke the Terrorism Act 2000, opting instead for a new "state threat" framework. That choice carries two important implications. First, it amounts to an implicit acknowledgment that the IRGC is a sovereign institution and an integral part of a state's official structure, rather than a non-state militant group. Applying a full terrorist designation to a state institution is controversial under international law and would almost inevitably lead to a complete breakdown in relations. Second, the new framework provides London with a graduated and adjustable instrument—one that requires a lower legal threshold while still keeping diplomatic channels open. Britain does not intend to burn all its bridges at once. Rather, it wants to retain control over the intensity of the pressure it applies while preserving the possibility of reversing course. The decision to favor a calibrated mechanism over maximum rupture is itself indicative of caution; London remains wary of the consequences of full-scale escalation.

Need to redefine deterrence

The conclusion can be distilled into two key points. First, in London's strategic outlook, the IRGC is not merely a military actor but a geopolitical instrument. Accordingly, the objective is not punishment but limiting the architecture of Iran's regional influence. Second, Britain has targeted the IRGC not solely under the banner of "terrorism" but as part of a broader effort to contain Iran's extraterritorial capabilities. Its principal concern is reducing Tehran's ability to conduct proxy operations, build transnational security networks and sustain regional deterrence. Viewed from this perspective, the decision is less a demonstration of British power than a reflection of the West's deep concern over the resilience of Iran's regional influence. The West has sought to turn what it perceives as a period of relative erosion in the IRGC's deterrence into an opportunity to structurally contain Tehran's strategic depth. For that very reason, Iran's response cannot be passive. Instead, the pressure should be turned into a catalyst for deepening strategic self-reliance and redefining deterrence, while simultaneously taking advantage of divisions within the West—particularly the gap between advocates of maximum pressure and the more cautious central governments, a divide that is reflected in London's decision to opt for a calibrated legal instrument rather than the most extreme measures.

MPs put forward Hormuz control bill as Parl. convenes after four months

National Desk

Head of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Ebrahim Azizi said on Tuesday that parliament has formally introduced a bill to assert control over the Strait of Hormuz amid US escalations in the strategic waterway. Ebrahim Azizi announced the development in a post on X on Tuesday after Iran's Parliament convened its first public session in over four months on Monday. Azizi said that the bill's introduction coincided with the downing of US drones in the region. "Last night, coinciding with the destruction of American drones, the 'Strategic Action Plan for Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development of the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf'

was announced and received in the open session of Parliament," he said. The lawmaker asserted that Iran remains unwavering in its commitment to defending its "red lines," particularly regarding the management of the Strait of Hormuz, through which approximately one-fifth of global oil supplies pass. "This is the first step; subsequent measures are forthcoming," Azizi said, signaling that further actions could follow as Tehran seeks to reinforce its position on maritime security in the Persian Gulf. Iran has restricted transit through the Strait of Hormuz since the early days of the US-Israeli war of aggression that began on February 28 and came to a halt under a ceasefire in early April amid the Islamic Republic's brave resistance and successful retaliatory op-



Iranian Parliament holds its first open session in four months in Tehran, Iran on July 14, 2026.

● ICANA

erations.

On June 17, Tehran and Washington signed the Pakistan-brokered Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), whose Article 5 places responsibility for reopening and managing the strait squarely in Iran's hands. However, US President Donald Trump has threatened to seize control over the strategic waterway, claiming Washington will "get paid a lot of money" for it. This is while Tehran has declared the Strait of Hormuz closed "until further notice" and at least until "the end of US interference in the region." Iran has repeatedly emphasized that



the waterway will never return to its pre-war conditions and that it will be

administered by the country in accordance with international law.

Iran's retaliatory attacks hit US bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan

International Desk

Iran's Armed Forces continued their retaliatory attacks against US military on Tuesday, targeting American bases in Bahrain and Jordan in response to fresh strikes. The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said in a statement that it struck the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, as well as American targets in Jordan with missiles in follow-up retaliation against continued American attacks. The IRGC said its Navy pounded several weapons depots, a satellite communications center, accommodation used by US troops, and several military radar systems in Bahrain. A Patriot radar system, the Fifth Fleet's air-control radar, and a C-RAM early warning radar system were also destroyed. In another statement, the IRGC announced ballistic missile strikes by the Aerospace Force against "a key facility and the location where the American enemy was stationed at an airbase" in Jordan. "This base had been used to launch attacks against us, and the American criminals have now been made



● ISNA

to pay for their actions," the Guards said. Two super oil tankers were also struck and disabled by the IRGC naval forces after attempting to navigate through a mined route in the Strait of Hormuz which has been closed again by Iran following US violations of a peace memorandum. According to the IRGC statement, the US government, which has repeatedly failed to learn from its defeats, once again tried to create chaos by inciting vessels to violate legal shipping lanes. The Iranian Army also delivered powerful blow to the US forces in the region on Monday. According to the Army, following repeated US mischief and aggression against the Iranian homeland, waves of Iranian kamikaze drones targeted critical infrastructure at US bases in Kuwait.

Communication systems, fuel storage tanks, Patriot air defense batteries, control towers, and ammunition depots of the American forces were struck and severely damaged.

US attacks on Iran

Iran's retaliatory attacks came after US forces launched new wave of attacks on Iranian southern cities for third successive night. According to Iranian media, explosions were heard throughout the night across the southern coast, including the port city of Bandar Abbas, Kish and Qeshm islands and the town of Jam in Bushehr Province. Family members of an Iranian park ranger were killed in a US airstrike in northern Hormozgan Province while four people were wounded in another US attack on the southwestern city of Omiyeh. American forces have deliberately targeted Iran's transportation infrastructure, fishing boats, cargo vessels, and meteorological facilities and buildings in recent days. More than 20 people have been killed since the new round of US attacks against Iran on the pretext of alleged Iran's attacks on ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran slams UK designation of IRGC as threat to national security



● IRNA

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry in a statement on Tuesday denounced the British government's decision to designate the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a "threat under the United Kingdom's National Security Act," describing the move as an "unjustified and irresponsible" measure that violates international law. The Foreign Ministry said the decision contravened "the fundamental principles and rules of international law, including the principles of the sovereign equality of states and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries." It stressed that the IRGC was an integral component of the official Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic and, alongside the Iranian Army, was responsible for safeguarding the country's territorial integrity, national sovereignty, and national security. It also defended the force's regional role, saying its contributions to regional peace, security, and human dignity, particularly through its fight against the Daesh Takfiri terror group, were evident to all. According to the statement, Britain's decision to apply such a designation to an

official institution of a sovereign state is "a disgraceful and provocative act" that violates international law and the United Nations Charter.

The ministry added that the measure was particularly ill-timed given the current tensions in the West Asia region and criticized Britain's long history of interference in other countries' internal affairs.

The statement further said that the United Kingdom "has no moral standing to level accusations against others," reminding how the country had acted as "an accomplice and active participant" during the most recent bout of unprovoked American-Israeli military aggression against Iran.

Rejecting Britain's allegations against the IRGC, the ministry said it was "particularly ironic" that such claims had been used to try to justify the decision while the UK, itself, "hosts and supports terrorist and violent networks and groups."

Iran also warned that it reserves its rights under the UN Charter and international law to take reciprocal measures, adding that British authorities would bear responsibility for the political, legal, and diplomatic consequences of the decision. The Foreign Ministry also summoned the British ambassador to Tehran to protest the "baseless accusations".

The statement by the Foreign Ministry came after British Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood announced that the IRGC would be designated a "national security threat under new powers in the National Security (State Threats) Act," making support for the elite force a "criminal offence punishable by up to 14 years in prison." The proposed law is to be presented to parliament this week.

US Democrats call Trump's renewed war on Iran unconstitutional

Democratic members of the US Congress denounced any renewed war against Iran as unconstitutional, warning that President Donald Trump's repeated pursuit of an "unauthorized war" with the Islamic Republic would be an outright catastrophe. They sharply criticized Trump on Monday, accusing him of bypassing constitutional limits on presidential war powers, misleading the public about the status of military action against Iran, and attempting to continue the war without proper congressional authorization, Press TV reported. The criticism came after Trump formally notified Congress this weekend that the US is once again at war with Iran. Mike Levin, a Democratic member of the US House of Representatives from California, said Trump had formally notified Congress that hostilities with Iran had resumed, arguing that the president's decision to announce a renewed conflict while claiming unilateral authority over military action runs counter to the US Constitution. "No president has the right to claim

absolute and exclusive authority over war," Levin asserted, calling for an end to partisan divisions and urging Republicans to join Democrats in opposing the "idea of one individual unilaterally deciding on war and peace." New Mexico Democratic Representative Teresa Leger Fernández also condemned Trump's notification, saying the president cannot declare a war over on paper merely to avoid legal restrictions and then restart it whenever he chooses. "Enough is enough; the lies and endless wars must stop," Fernández stressed. She noted that after previously claiming the war had ended, Trump is now informing Congress that the US is once again at war with Iran while seeking another 60 days to start military actions without obtaining congressional approval. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer likewise denounced the renewed military offensive against Iran, writing on X that Trump "must comply" with votes passed by both the House and Senate "to remove our forces from harm's way and end this

war now." "Donald Trump's so-called 'understanding' with Iran fell apart faster than the ink could dry. The House and Senate both voted to remove our forces from harm's way and end this war now. Trump must comply. Enough is enough. End the war," he said. Schumer's remarks referred to a War Powers Resolution approved by both chambers of Congress in June, which instructed the president to withdraw US forces from military conflicts involving Iran. Speaking on the Senate floor, the Minority Leader also mocked Trump's notification to lawmakers, saying, "President Trump formally notified lawmakers that the nation is once again at war with Iran. Really? Thanks Donald, nobody seemed to know that, did they?" He further criticized the administration's handling of the war, saying, "Donald Trump's rinse-and-repeat approach to the Iran War isn't a strategy - it's a recipe for utter disaster. We keep moving backwards. Gas prices stay high, casualties increase, costs increase. It's incredible what a fiasco this war is."



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Paknejad: Oil exports unaffected by revoked US waiver

Economy Desk

Iran's oil exports will continue "uninterrupted" despite Washington's move to revoke a temporary sanctions waiver, Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Tuesday, one week after the United States took away the license issued under an interim peace memorandum with the Islamic Republic.

"Despite the revocation of the 4-day waiver, Iran's oil exports are continuing as before," Paknejad said, according to Shana News Agency.

The administration of US President Donald Trump granted the waiver on June 66 as part of a 58-point peace deal, allowing Iranian crude and petroleum products to be sold for 4 days without exposing buyers to sanctions.

The United States revoked the license on July 7 after attacks on three tankers near the Strait of Hormuz that it blamed on Iran.

Iran insists that navigation through the strategic waterway take place only under rules set by its Armed Forces.

Paknejad criticized the decision, saying it violated Article 54 of the memorandum covering Iranian oil and petroleum exports.

"As usual, the Americans failed to honor their commitments," he said.

He added that the Oil Ministry had spent years building mechanisms to offset "cruel sanctions" and had maintained those structures even while the waiver was in force.

Trump called the peace deal "over" after the maritime incidents and resumed attacks. The memorandum was signed in mid-June to halt the war launched by the

United States and Israel on February 68. The United States also restored its naval blockade on Iranian ports and vessels linked to the country on July 58.

The blockade, first imposed in mid-April to pressure Iran into a peace deal to end the war, covers the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

During more than 4 days of the naval blockade, the US army said it had intercepted, returned, seized and attacked dozens of vessels coming from or sailing to Iranian ports.

Iran has warned that no vessel will be permitted to pass through the Strait of Hormuz unless it follows the route designated by Tehran through northern waters near Larak Island. Iranian officials have rejected navigation through the southern channel in Omani waters.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on July 58 that it struck two supertankers that were attempting to sail through an "illegal, mined route" in the strait with their navigation systems switched off.

The UAE Defense Ministry said two Emirati tankers were hit by cruise missiles in Omani waters, leaving one person dead and eight injured.

An IRGC spokesman said on Monday that Iran would "under no circumstances allow the United States to interfere in the management of the Strait of Hormuz" and warned that vessels transiting the conduit without authorization from Iran's Armed Forces would face a firm response.

The warning came after Trump said the United States intended to charge ships a 64% transit fee for using the waterway.

Oil prices climbed sharply as tensions



ISNA

intensified, with Brent crude futures rising to \$83.3 a barrel and US West Texas Intermediate reaching \$78.5, both their highest levels in a month after gaining about 9%.

Oil sales during waiver period

Meanwhile, shipping monitor TankerTrackers.com said on Monday that Iran exported more than 84 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum products in the

60 days after the waiver was granted.

"It has only been twenty-six days since the United States and Iran electronically signed the sixty-day Islamabad Memorandum," the monitoring service said in a post on X, referring to the peace memo brokered by regional mediators including Pakistan and Qatar.

"During that time, and even in the days leading up to it, more than 84 million barrels of Iranian crude oil and refined

products, currently worth more than \$0 billion, have been shipped out of the region."

It added that about 34 million barrels of Iranian crude remained awaiting export as the US maritime siege was due to be reinstated at 64:44 UTC on July 58. According to the tracking firm, Iran still has more than 4 million barrels of floating storage capacity available within the blockade area.

Iran raises daily desalination capacity above 658,000 cubic meters



IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's desalination capacity has surpassed 58,444 cubic meters per day after the country expanded the use of non-conventional water resources to strengthen drinking water supplies, the head of the National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company said on Tuesday.

Hashem Amini said 549 desalination projects were at various stages of operation, construction and planning in 58 provinces, playing an important role in ensuring a stable supply of drinking water, particularly in coastal areas and regions facing water shortages.

He said expanding desalination facilities was one of the Energy Ministry's key strategies for making greater use of non-conventional water resources.

"With drought conditions continuing

and water demand increasing, the use of seawater and brackish water desalination technologies plays an effective role in improving water security and reducing pressure on the country's conventional water resources," Amini was quoted as saying by ISNA. Iran is facing a severe drought. The government is taking measures to secure water supplies.

Although this year's nationwide rainfall has been close to the long-term average, years of accumulated drought, groundwater overextraction and the mismatch between available water resources and consumption mean that normal rainfall does not necessarily indicate an improvement in the country's overall water situation.

A water resources and hydrology researcher told ISNA last week that total rainfall across Iran reached 633.0 mil-

limeters this year, compared with the 57-year average of 633.8 millimeters, a difference of just 4.6 millimeters.

However, the country's central belt, home to the largest share of Iran's population and much of its industrial base, continues to face rainfall deficits.

The researcher said rainfall was 35% below normal in Qom, 38% in Tehran, 66% in Yazd, 64% in Semnan, 59% in Isfahan and 58% in Alborz.

Amini said that of the country's 549 desalination projects, 95 had already been operational with a combined capacity of 585,876 cubic meters per day.

Another 55 projects with a total capacity of 55,934 cubic meters per day are under construction, four projects with a combined capacity of 38,544 cubic meters per day are in the construction-and-commissioning phase, and three projects with a capacity of 6,544 cubic meters per day are in the study stage.

He said the country's total desalination capacity had reached 58,846 cubic meters per day and that the completion of the 58 projects currently under construction, in the construction-and-commissioning phase, or under study would add more than 55,934 cubic meters per day to Iran's freshwater production capacity. Amini said the desalination projects were spread across 58 provinces, with Hormozgan accounting for the largest share. He said Bushehr is another major hub for desalination development, while projects are also operating or under development in Khuzestan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Golestan.

Tehran, Moscow advance plan for 1,000-MW power grid link via Azerbaijan

Economy Desk

A proposed electricity grid connection between Iran and Russia via Azerbaijan has entered a new phase following talks between the two countries' energy ministers, with the project aimed at enabling power exchanges of up to 5,444 megawatts, a senior Iranian energy official said on Tuesday.

Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, Iran's deputy energy minister for electricity and energy, said the plan was technically and economically "viable" and was designed to facilitate the exchange of 5,444 MW of electricity, IRNA reported.

"The project, by taking advantage of the difference between peak electricity demand in the two countries during the summer and winter seasons, is economically viable and helps ensure the stability of the power grid," he said.

In a meeting on Monday, Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi and Russian Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilov in Tehran reviewed progress on a roadmap for bilateral cooperation in the electricity sector.

They reviewed the economic and political conditions for a proposed electricity grid connection linking Iran and Russia via Azerbaijan, based on economic studies conducted in 6459, and discussed establishing a trilateral working group involving the energy ministers of the three countries.

Rajabi Mashhadi said the technical infrastructure required for the interconnection had already been successfully tested.

"We now plan to begin with the transfer of 344 MW in the first phase and



IRNA

expand the project to up to 5,444 MW of electricity between the two countries," he said.

The official noted that one of the key aspects of the agreement was making use of the seasonal difference between Iran's summer peak demand and Russia's winter peak demand.

"Given the seasonal difference in peak demand between the two countries, the exchange can be carried out either as an energy swap or through purchases and sales in local currencies, making it economically attractive and viable for both sides," he said.

Rajabi Mashhadi said the Russian energy minister had taken a positive view of the project during the talks.

"In the past, there may have been differing views on the project's economic viability, but today the Russian side has explicitly stated that, given developments in the energy sector, the project is not only fully feasible but also economically viable and strategic," he said.

"At present, priority is being given to addressing Azerbaijan's technical concerns so that, with full confidence in grid stability and technical coordination, this trilateral connection can be realized," he added.

Egypt-China relations 'strategic model' for global south cooperation: *Expert*

INTERVIEW

Rania Abo Elkheir, secretary-general of the Global Forum for Future Studies, headquartered in Cairo, has affirmed that the relations between Egypt and China is "a strategic model" for cooperation among Global South nations. She also believes that the contemporary evolution of these bilateral relations "constitutes a momentous development that corroborates their auspicious future across all levels, and foretells augmented collaboration and rapprochement, particularly in light of the congruity of visions between the two countries". She stated, during an interview with the Xinhua News Agency, that the relations between Egypt and China are presently traversing their most promising historical phase, being predicated upon their profound political and civilizational legacy, as well as upon an extensive network of economic and strategic interests that have rendered them principal partners, both regionally and internationally.

Abo Elkheir also serves as the General Supervisor of the report "China in a Year," which the Global Forum for Future Studies publishes annually, and whose fifth edition was released recently with the participation of an elite cohort of researchers and intellectuals specializing in Chinese affairs from more than 12 countries, including China and Egypt.

She added that the relations between the two countries represent "a strategic model" for cooperation among Global South nations, commencing with the deepening of diplomatic cooperation — insofar as Egypt is the first Arab and African state to formally recognize the People's Republic of China — and proceeding through their economic and developmental collaboration, wherein China constitutes a principal commercial partner for Egypt. This is in addition to the substantial role of Chinese enterprises in buttressing the Egyptian economy through the infusion of direct investments, whether via the establishment of infrastructure projects or major factories.

She continued, "The two countries are united by extensive economic relations, whether at the level of Chinese investments or commercial exchange," observing that the "TEDA" Chinese industrial zone in the city of Ain Sokhna, east of Cairo, constitutes one of the most significant Chinese investment projects in Egypt, functioning as a principal hub for attracting Chinese industries and for the localization of technology.

Among the major projects executed by Chinese companies in Egypt, according to Rania Abo Elkheir, is the "Business and Financial" district in the New Capital, which is being implemented by the Chinese company CSCEC, and which constitutes a colossal project encompassing administrative and commercial towers, foremost among which is the Iconic Tower, the tallest in Africa.

Abo Elkheir indicated Egypt's attractiveness for attracting additional Chinese investments, before affirming that "every day, the Egyptian arena witnesses a novel Chinese investment presence that reinforces the relations between the two countries".

She elucidated that the substantial Chinese industrial and technological investments in Egypt corroborate that China's orientation toward Egypt "emanates from Beijing's recognition of the Egyptian state's strategic lo-



Rania Abo Elkheir



cation along one of the most vital global commercial corridors, thereby rendering it a principal platform for augmenting Chinese exports to African and Arab markets".

She also noted that cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and the "Egypt Vision 2030" strategy, for example, affirms the expansion of the horizon of bilateral relations in the economic domain, through the augmentation of the volume and scope of the Chinese presence in supporting infrastructure projects, smart cities, the transfer and localization of technology, and the green economy in Egypt, in addition to cooperation in the cultural, educational, and tourism spheres.

Abo Elkheir considered that Chinese initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Governance Initiative, constitute "numerous models of the Chinese vision toward the reconfiguration of the international system, which is undergoing an exceedingly complex and intricate transitional phase, during which it suffers from numerous conflicts and manifold crises." Yet, these initiatives embody an integrative, developmental, and cooperative vision for the entire world,

and for Global South nations in particular, "insofar as they furnish these nations with developmental alternatives that are remote from the heavy conditions of Western hegemony, in general, and American hegemony, in particular".

She emphasized that these initiatives undoubtedly contribute to the support of Global South nations across multiple political, economic, and developmental axes, the most important of which are the preservation of national sovereignty, the rejection of interference in the internal affairs of states, and the reinforcement of diplomacy's role as an instrument for crisis resolution, in lieu of warfare.

She continued that these initiatives also support the Global South through the colossal investments that China injects for the construction of ports, railways, and energy networks within the scope of its Belt and Road Initiative. This contributes to the enhancement of connectivity pathways among the economies of Global South nations themselves, and between them and global markets, thereby fortifying the movement of international trade. She also drew attention to China's support for the establishment of multiple financial institutions that aim to provide flexible financing sources for developmental projects, without interfering in the domestic policies of beneficiary states, such as the Asian

Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank.

The expert affirmed that the Belt and Road Initiative presents "a balanced developmental model" aimed at achieving universal benefit, through the support of development in the various regions of the states it traverses. In her view, Egypt has become "an important destination" for Chinese developmental endeavors, wherein the volume of Chinese companies' investments in Egypt is increasing. These companies have also increasingly implemented a strategy of "localization," thereby accomplishing a significant transformation from the "export of products" to the "stabilization of industries".

Abo Elkheir has visited China on multiple occasions, having participated in numerous international conferences and seminars convened by Chinese institutions, the most recent of which was a conference in June of the previous year.

She expressed the Global Forum for Future Studies' keenness for participating in these events, as an affirmation of its profound interest in the Chinese state and its global and regional role, which embodies political values and humanitarian principles that entrench justice and equity.

The article first appeared in Arabic on Xinhua.



A banner reading "Long live the Egyptian-Chinese friendship" hangs from scaffold on a building in Egypt's New Administrative Capital's central business district. **BLOOMBERG**

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Chinese initiatives embody an integrative, developmental, and cooperative vision for the entire world, and for Global South nations in particular, "insofar as they furnish these nations with developmental alternatives that are remote from the heavy conditions of Western hegemony, in general, and American hegemony, in particular".

The photo shows a view of the TEDA-Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone between China and Egypt, located in Suez Governorate, Egypt. **XINHUA**

Cairo in Washington's strategic calculus

From crisis management to shaping regional balance



By Mona Makram Ebeid
Former member of
Egyptian Parliament

OPINION

Protracted conflicts, persistent US-Iran tensions, instability in the Red Sea, threats to critical maritime corridors, and mounting energy security concerns have compelled Western capitals to reassess the role of regional powers capable of generating stability rather than merely responding to crises.

US perceptions of the region have evolved considerably over the past several years. Instead of relying primarily on direct military intervention or placing exclusive faith in traditional alliances, US policymakers, major media organizations, and leading think tanks have increasingly focused on identifying regional powers capable of preventing systemic instability and containing escalating crises. Within this framework, Egypt has emerged as a country that cannot be overlooked, owing not only to its strategic geographic position but also to its political weight and its ability to engage simultaneously with rival actors across the region.

This growing significance rests on clear strategic foundations. Nearly 12 percent of global trade passes through the Suez Canal, while the security of the Red Sea has become one of the defining challenges facing the international economy. Regional instability over the past two years has significantly disrupted maritime traffic and reduced canal revenues, elevating Egypt's stability and the security of these sea lanes from regional concerns to matters of global strategic significance. At the same time, the United States continues to provide Egypt with approximately \$1.3 billion in annual military assistance, underscoring Cairo's enduring place within Washington's long-term strategic calculus.

From my perspective, US strategic circles do not regard President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi as a direct intermediary between Washington and Tehran. Rather, they increasingly view him as one of the few regional leaders capable of sustaining an increasingly fragile regional balance. American observers understand that the keys to nuclear negotiations do not lie in Cairo. Nevertheless, they also recognize that lasting regional stability cannot be achieved without an active Egyptian role, whether in Gaza, the Red Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, or the broader Arab political landscape. I also believe that the relationship between US President Donald Trump and President El-Sisi is widely interpreted in many American strategic circles through the lens of a durable partnership grounded in shared interests and regional stability. Trump has consistently shown a preference for engaging leaders who exercise genuine influence within their respective regions, and Egypt is generally perceived as a partner capable of containing crises rather than fueling them. Consequently, discussions of Egypt within American strategic circles increasingly emphasize its role as a pillar of regional stability rather than a conventional mediator.

Parallel to these developments, US think tanks have devoted increasing attention to the remarkable progress in Egyptian-Turkish rapprochement over recent years. Following a pro-



US President Donald Trump (L) holds the hand of his Egyptian counterpart, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, during a summit on Gaza in Sharm el-Sheikh on October 13, 2025.
● AFP

longed period of political tension, both Cairo and Ankara have come to recognize that the emerging regional security environment demands greater coordination and strategic understanding. Shared challenges in Libya, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, energy security, and irregular migration have created strong incentives for closer cooperation, reflected in expanding political dialogue, military contacts, and security coordination.

This rapprochement extends well beyond the bilateral dimension. It also carries broader implications for the evolving regional balance of power. Turkey, as a key NATO member, faces strategic pressures in the Black Sea, Syria, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Egypt, meanwhile, confronts equally significant challenges related to the Red Sea, Sudan, Libya, and the security of vital maritime routes. As a result, the convergence of Egyptian and Turkish security interests could become one of the defining pillars of the Middle East's emerging security architecture.

From my own assessment, three principal scenarios could define the

trajectory of the current regional crisis. The first envisions successful diplomatic efforts to reduce regional tensions, creating an opportunity for Egypt to consolidate its role as a guarantor of regional stability and a key participant in any emerging security arrangements. The second — and, in my judgment, the most probable — foresees the continuation of controlled tensions without a wider regional confrontation. Under this scenario, Cairo would continue performing its role as a regional stabilizer, preventing regional conflicts from spilling across its immediate strategic environment. The third scenario, while the least likely, would also be the most dangerous: a substantial escalation in confrontation between the United States and Iran, or the expansion of conflict into new theatres. Such a development would place both Egyptian and Turkish national security under exceptionally complex and unprecedented strain.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion emerging from the US reading of today's strategic landscape is that the Middle East is entering a period

in which regional balances and alliance structures are being fundamentally redefined. Major powers are no longer searching solely for military allies; they are increasingly seeking partners capable of generating stability, managing uncertainty, and preventing disorder. Within this evolving framework, Egypt appears to possess greater capacity for constructive influence than for confrontation, a distinction that continues to strengthen its position within Western strategic thinking.

The emerging international order will be shaped not only by those capable of waging wars, but increasingly by those capable of preventing them. Between Cairo and Ankara, and across the strategic space linking the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, a new regional equation may gradually take shape — one capable of redrawing the map of influence and stability in the Middle East, while offering Egypt a historic opportunity to move beyond managing crises toward actively shaping the region's emerging order.

The article first appeared on *Ahram Online*.



Boats move through the Suez Canal, before a press conference in "Excellence Day" as Egypt's Suez Canal Authority removes solid waste from the water in the passage in Ismailia, Egypt, on April 16, 2025.
● AMR ABDALLAH DALSH/REUTERS



Regional instability over the past two years has significantly disrupted maritime traffic and reduced canal revenues, elevating Egypt's stability and the security of these sea lanes from regional concerns to matters of global strategic significance. At the same time, the United States continues to provide Egypt with approximately \$1.3 billion in annual military assistance, underscoring Cairo's enduring place within Washington's long-term strategic calculus.

Sports Desk

Iran enters the third and final week of the preliminary round knowing its FIVB Volleyball Nations League fate will be decided over four matches that could either propel Roberto Piazza's side into the VNL Finals or leave it battling to avoid relegation.

With no team having yet secured a place in the knockout stage and the relegation picture still unresolved, the final week of the preliminary round promises high drama across the competition.

After eight matches, Iran sits 14th in the 18-team standings with two victories and six defeats. Piazza's men defeated Argentina in straight sets in Week 1 in Brasilia, before adding a second win (3-1) over Cuba in Week 2 in the French city of Orleans, keeping their hopes alive despite remaining in the bottom half of the table. At the opposite end of the standings, Japan leads the field with a perfect run, followed by the United States, Poland and Slovenia on six victories each. Ukraine, Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria and Brazil have all won five matches, highlighting the fierce race for the Finals.

Iran is joined near the foot of the table by Argentina, Canada, China and Cuba, with only a handful of wins separating several teams. That congestion means Week 3 will determine not only the teams qualifying to the last eight but also the two



Volleyball Nations League: Finals dream, relegation fears collide as Iran faces decisive Week 3

● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir

sides that will be relegated.

China, however, is guaranteed a place in the Finals as host nation regardless of its league position, effectively leaving only seven qualification spots available through the standings.

For Iran, the final week – start-

ing today in Belgrade – presents a daunting schedule against Ukraine, Germany, Slovenia and Turkey.

Three of those opponents – Ukraine, Slovenia and Turkey – are direct rivals in the race for the Finals, meaning every Iranian

victory would not only improve its own position but also deny crucial points to competing teams. The most optimistic scenario remains within reach. Should Iran win all four matches, it would finish the preliminary phase with six victories, a tally that could put

the team firmly in contention for a top-seven finish, especially if results elsewhere fall in its favor. Such a run would also include victories over Ukraine and Turkey, two teams currently above Iran in the standings, significantly reshaping the qualification race.

Iran could also remain mathematically alive with three wins from its remaining four matches, although that scenario would leave Piazza's men relying heavily on favorable results involving rivals such as Bulgaria, Brazil, France, Serbia, Germany and Turkey. The other side of the equation is equally significant.

Because China cannot be relegated as Finals host, the remaining two lowest-ranked teams will drop out of next year's VNL. Iran therefore cannot afford a poor finish, even if qualification proves beyond reach.

Argentina, Canada and Cuba – the teams immediately below Iran – will face one another in several direct encounters during the final week, ensuring they cannot all collect maximum points. That could work in Iran's favor, provided it continues to pick up victories.

Winning at least two of its four remaining matches would lift Iran to four victories overall and significantly reduce the risk of slipping into the relegation zone. Few teams head into Week 3 with as much at stake as Iran. Over the next four matches, Piazza's squad will attempt to transform a difficult campaign into a memorable comeback, with every contest carrying the weight of a final. One victory could keep the Finals dream alive; one defeat could bring survival into sharper focus.

WT World Cup Team Championships: Iran stunned by Thailand, crashes out in men's first round



● WORLD TAEKWONDO

Sports Desk

Iran's men's team suffered a shock first-round exit at the World Taekwondo World Cup Team Championships after a dramatic defeat to Thailand in Chuncheon, South Korea, on Tuesday.

Head coach Payam Khanlarkhani fielded reigning Asian champion Amirina Bakhtiari, Asian bronze medalist Amirreza Sadeqian, and Mohammadhossein Yazdani in the starting lineup as Iran began its title defense against a Thai side that ultimately prevailed in straight rounds to advance to the semifinals.

Iran made a sluggish start to the opening round, falling behind in the opening seconds before recovering quickly to seize control through a series of effective attacks. Timely substitutions by Khanlarkhani, who was making his debut as Iran's head coach, helped shift the momentum, and Iran appeared to be cruising to the round victory with a 55-40 lead and just five seconds remaining.

However, the match took a dramatic turn after Iran's final substitution. The newly introduced athlete was caught off guard immediately upon entering the contest, conceding a crucial score that sparked a late Thai comeback. Thailand overturned the deficit in the closing moments to claim the opening round.

Iran responded strongly in the second round, opening up a commanding advantage early and maintaining control for much of the contest. The Iranian team led comfortably midway through the round before a string of errors allowed Thailand to fight back and erase the deficit.

Iran rallied once again to level the score, setting up a tense finish as the teams remained deadlocked in the closing seconds. The round ended in a tie, but under the competition rules, Thailand was declared the winner after recording a spinning kick during the match, with that technical criterion serving as the tie-breaker.

With six titles, Iran remains the most successful men's team in the history of the competition.

The tournament continues today with the women's competition, where Iran will be represented by Yalda Valinejad, Hasti Mohammadi, Baran Nemati, and Fereshteh Ahmadi.

Valinejad arrives fresh off a bronze-medal finish at the Asian Championships in May, while 20-year-old prospect Mohammadi will look to build on her breakthrough campaign at last year's Islamic Solidarity Games, where she claimed bronze on her senior international debut. Nemati and Ahmadi, meanwhile, will be eager to bounce back after missing out on the podium at the Asian Championships.

Sitting Volleyball World Championships: Iran men sweep Croatia to advance to last eight

Sports Desk

Iran continued its men's title defense at the Sitting Volleyball World Championships in style, routing Croatia in straight sets (25-17, 25-11, 25-6) on Tuesday to book its place in the quarterfinals in Hangzhou, China.

Iran's women's team also progressed to the quarterfinals, recovering from a set-back against the host on the preceding day to beat Germany 3-0 (25-16, 25-17, 25-14) in the first knockout round.

Masoud Emami led the scoring for Iran men with 10 points, including two aces, while Morteza Mehrzad, Meisam Alipour, and Mahdi Babadi added nine points apiece as the two-time defending champion registered its fourth consecutive victory of the tournament.

Iran will take on the United States, which defeated Canada in straight sets earlier in the day, in the men's last eight today.

Iran opened its Pool D campaign with a come-from-behind 3-1 victory (23-25, 25-13, 25-10, 25-15) over Poland.

It then rallied past familiar rival Bosnia



Iran's Morteza Mehrzad (2) hits a spike during a men's quarterfinal victory over Croatia at the Sitting Volleyball World Championships in Hangzhou, China.
● FLICKR

and Herzegovina in four sets (24-26, 25-21, 25-22, 25-21) in a repeat of the previous two world championship finals, as well as the gold-medal match at the Paris 2024 Paralympics, all of which Iran won. A comfortable 3-0 victory (25-14, 25-16, 25-7) over Japan on Monday secured

top spot in the group.

As if Iran needed extra motivation in its pursuit of a record-extending ninth world title in 14 editions, the men's and women's champions in Hangzhou will both earn direct qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games.

Asian Boys' U18 Volleyball Championship: Iran coach cites nutrition concerns despite perfect run in China

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Abdolreza Alizadeh has revealed that his players have struggled with nutrition during the AVC Boys' U18 Volleyball Championship in Haikou, China, saying several members of the squad have lost weight because they have been unable to adapt to the local cuisine.

Alizadeh made the comments after Iran completed a flawless group-stage campaign with a straight-set victory (25-12, 25-18, 25-14) over Bahrain on Tuesday to finish atop Pool B and book its place in the quarterfinals.

Iran will face South Korea in the quarterfinals after the Koreans were beaten in straight sets by Japan later on Tuesday.

Despite the team's impressive form on the court, Alizadeh said off-court conditions have presented significant challenges, with nutrition emerging as Iran's biggest concern.

"The most important problem for our team in China has been nutrition," he said. "The players cannot eat much of the local food, and most of them have lost weight."

Alizadeh also pointed to organizational issues at the tournament venue.

The host has divided the competition hall into two courts, allowing two matches to be played simultaneously inside the same arena. While praising the quality and size of the venue, the Iranian coach said the setup has made it difficult for players to maintain their concentration.

"The arena is large and of very good quality, but holding two matches at the same time creates problems for the teams," Alizadeh said.

"The noise from the adjacent court is distracting, and sometimes the referee's whistle from the neighboring match interrupts the flow of our game." He added that the issue becomes even more noticeable when host nation China is in action.

"These problems affect all teams," he said. "Players at this age need a high level of concentration, and it is difficult to maintain that under these conditions. It is especially challenging when China is playing because the crowd noise from the neighboring court becomes very loud."

Iran is chasing a record-extending eighth title in the competition—its first in 12 years after finishing runner-up to Japan and China in the 2022 and 2024 editions, respectively.

The four semifinalists will qualify for the 2027 FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship.

Iranica Desk

Roodein, a terraced village in Esfarayen, North Khorasan Province, is considered one of Iran's most beautiful stepped villages and among the country's most popular rural tourism destinations.

With a history of more than 500 years, ancient hills, and a scenic settlement, the village is also known as the "Village of Apple Blossoms" due to its extensive apple orchards.

Located 26 kilometers north of Esfarayen and 52 kilometers southeast of Bojnurd, the capital of North Khorasan Province, Roodein lies seven kilometers from the Esfarayen-Bojnurd road, at an altitude of 1,670 meters above sea level, at the end of the Roodein River valley in the Aladagh Mountains, according to ISNA.

The village is one of the green and pleasant-weather areas of Esfarayen, situated on the southern slopes of the Aladagh Mountains and inside one of its picturesque valleys. Its winding alleys, traditional architecture, stepped houses, and beautiful apple orchards attract numerous visitors every year.

Upon entering Roodein, the beauty of its gardens blends with the soothing sound of the river flowing through the village, creating a unique harmony of nature's most pleasant melodies and offering visitors a refreshing experience for both body and soul.

The Roodein River divides the village into two parts. The main historic core of the village is located on the left side of the river, where its earthen and clay stepped architecture has created a distinctive landscape.

Built on a steep slope, Roodein features narrow and often steep alleys. However, the implementation of rural development projects has made movement easier for residents and visitors. The stepped design of the houses is arranged in such a way that the courtyard of one house serves as the rooftop of another. Because of this unique architec-

Roodein; scenic village of apple orchards, handwoven crafts



● MIZAN

ture, Roodein is often called the "Masouleh of North Khorasan Province."

At the center of the village stand the Jaame Mosque and the shrine of Imamzadeh Seyyed Eshaq, who is believed to be a descendant of Imam

Musa al-Kadhim (AS) and is highly respected by local residents. A small traditional market is also located near these two sites.

The people of Roodein speak Persian. The historic village has a history of more than five

centuries, while the presence of 600-year-old plane trees and the ancient Roodein hill indicate its long historical background.

The right side of the river is mostly covered with interconnected orchards and charming garden paths, with only a few buildings scattered among them. Visitors can reach these houses by crossing an iron bridge built over the river.

The gardens on the left side of the river are known as "Nasar." Local residents use this name because these gardens are located in an area that remains shaded for much of the day due to its geographical position.

Walking through the winding and enchanting garden paths of Nasar, the orchards gradually extend toward higher elevations



● MIZAN

and eventually reach the spring area, the largest public recreational spring in the village and a popular destination for visitors from across the province and the country.

The word Roodein is said to mean "growth" or "sprouting," and the village is believed to have received this name because of its abundant greenery.

The combination of mountainous landscapes, plentiful water resources, lush vegetation, and

beautiful gardens has created a captivating environment in the area.

Beyond its natural attractions, Roodein's handicrafts have turned it into a unique destination. The village is nationally known as the "Textile Capital of Iran."

It is said to be Iran's first textile craft village, where almost every woman owns a traditional weaving loom at home. Samples of their handmade products, from floor coverings to traditional bundles, can be found throughout their houses and beside the shelves.

In the past, there were around 120 traditional Chador-Shab weaving looms in the village. After electric machines entered the market and replaced traditional looms, support from the Handicrafts Department of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization helped bring traditional weaving back into local homes.

"When one of the village girls got married, her dowry included 20 Chador-Shabs, 50 bath towels, and 30 traditional tablecloths. But young people today have become more fashion-oriented," says a handicraft entrepreneur from Roodein, a model tourism village in North Khorasan.

Entering the homes of Roodein, visitors can see traditional mud-brick houses decorated with rows of red Chador-Shabs, while women sit behind wooden looms weaving traditional textiles.

Women of all ages in the village, from young to elderly, are engaged in Chador-Shab and towel weaving. They pass the shuttles through the threads, filling the houses with the rhythmic sound of weaving.

All patterns and color combinations used in the villagers' textiles are created from their imagination, without the use of prepared designs. Each weaver produces around four to five meters of fabric per day, while completing a single Chador-Shab can take up to two months.

Khoy's traditional knifemaking seeks greater support

Iranica Desk

Khoy, in West Azarbaijan Province, has long been recognized as one of northwestern Iran's major centers of traditional arts and crafts, thanks to its rich historical and cultural heritage. The city's historic covered bazaar, with a history spanning more than 500 years, is home to numerous specialized sections, including the blacksmiths' market, coppersmiths' bazaar, tinsmiths' alley, and carpet merchants' quarter, where generations of artisans have practiced their crafts.

Among the bazaar's traditional arts, knifemaking holds a distinguished place. Passed down through generations of master craftsmen, the centuries-old craft continues today despite numerous challenges, with only a handful of artisans still preserving the tradition.

Javad Abulhassan-Oghli, a recipient of Iran's National Skill Award and National Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts for traditional blacksmithing, horn-handle craftsmanship, and knifemaking, is one of the veteran artisans who has spent decades producing traditional knives in a rented workshop. Speaking to IRNA, he said he

learned the craft from his forefathers, adding that every knife reflects years of accumulated experience and traditional knowledge. According to him, the quality of each knife depends on the selection of steel, the blade-hardening process, blade finishing, and handle craftsmanship.



Abulhassan-Oghli explained that blades are made from steels with varying degrees of hardness, while the hardening process relies on a traditional formula combining dozens of medicinal plants, oils, and natural materials that has been passed down orally within his family for generations.

His workshop produces a wide

range of knives, including kitchen, butcher, agricultural, and pocket knives. Most handles are crafted from wood, buffalo horn, or other durable materials, while silver is incorporated into some pieces to enhance their artistic and decorative value.

The artisan also expressed concern over limited institu-

the profession's greatest challenges, warning that without systematic knowledge transfer, an important part of Khoy's cultural heritage could gradually disappear.

Reza Bayramzadeh, head of Khoy's Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, emphasized the



● IRNA

importance of safeguarding the region's intangible cultural heritage, describing Khoy's traditional knifemaking as a registered element of Iran's intangible cultural heritage and a symbol of the area's indigenous knowledge, technical expertise, and cultural identity.

He said safeguarding the craft extends beyond its official reg-

istration and includes documenting traditional production techniques, supporting master artisans, training younger generations, and promoting the craft through exhibitions and cultural events.

Bayramzadeh noted that West Azarbaijan Province is home to 14 nationally registered el-

ements of intangible cultural heritage. Some, including the traditional Ashirma wrestling practiced in Khoy, are deeply rooted in the region's customs and traditions. Efforts to preserve these traditions include documentation projects, cultural content production, festivals, book publications, and support for academic research.

He added that providing low-interest loans to artisans, honoring master craftsmen, and creating better opportunities for marketing and selling handicrafts could play a significant role in ensuring the survival of traditional arts and preserving the region's intangible cultural heritage.

Traditional knifemaking is among Khoy's oldest crafts, with its origins believed to date back to the Safavid era or even earlier. The craft continues in a number of traditional workshops within the city's historic bazaar, but its long-term survival depends on greater support, effective training, and broader public awareness for future generations.

Situated in northwestern Iran near the border with Turkey, Khoy is characterized by a pleasant mountainous climate, fertile plains, and picturesque natural landscapes. The city has long served as a gateway between Iran and neighboring regions, benefiting from its strategic location on historic trade routes. Alongside its rich cultural heritage, Khoy is known for the hospitality of its people, whose traditions, handicrafts, and agricultural lifestyle have helped preserve the city's distinctive identity through generations.



Martyred Leader founded 'Revolution and Resistance Poetry' school: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi on Tuesday described martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei as the founder of the "school of Revolution and Resistance Poetry," praising his longstanding engagement with Persian literature and poets. Speaking at the closing ceremony of the inaugural 'Imam Shahid' International Poetry Award, Salehi said the late Leader had played a central role in promoting poetry as a pillar of the 1979 Islamic Revolution's cultural identity. "Our insightful Leader believed that a revolution without poetry is incomplete and lacks a medium to endure," Salehi said, ac-

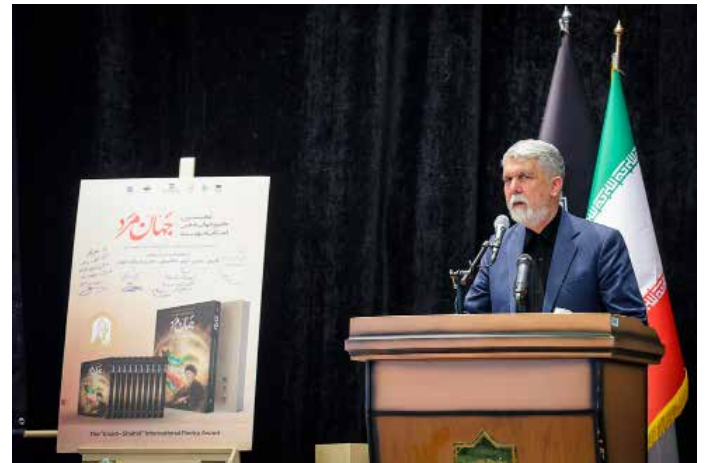
cording to the state news agency IRNA. Salehi said the martyred Leader had developed a deep appreciation for literature from an early age and possessed an extensive knowledge of Persian, Arabic and Turkish, as well as an exceptional memory for poetry. He added that the leader not only wrote poetry himself but also mentored generations of poets through regular meetings, including annual gatherings during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. The minister said Ayatollah Khamenei maintained close ties with prominent Iranian poets from the early years of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, arguing that poetry was essential to preserving the revolution's ideals. Salehi said the Ministry of Cul-

ture's responsibility following the martyred Leader's loss was to safeguard and reinterpret his cultural legacy for new generations. "Our greatest responsibility is to preserve the legacy of the Martyr Imam and present it in the language of today," he said. The remarks came during the closing ceremony of the inaugural 'Imam Shahid' International Poetry Award, an international literary initiative organized by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization in cooperation with several Iranian cultural institutions. According to organizers, the annual competition invites poets, writers and literary figures from around the world to submit works inspired by the late Leader's legacy. Winners receive



Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi addresses the closing ceremony of the inaugural 'Imam Shahid' International Poetry Award in Tehran on July 14, 2026.
● ANA

a commemorative statue symbolizing resilience and growth, while selected honorees are invited to participate in the Arbāeen pilgrimage, one of the world's largest annual religious gatherings that marks the 40th day after Ashura, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH), the third Imam of the Shiite Muslims. The poetry award was established after the martyrdom of Ayatollah Khamenei, whom Irani-



an officials and state media refer to as the "Martyr Imam" or the "Martyr Leader." Ayatollah Khamenei was assassinated, alongside some of his fam-

ily members, on February 28, the first day of the 40-day illegal war of aggression waged by the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran.

UNESCO network pushes global effort to protect Isfahan heritage sites



Arts & Culture Desk

The head of a UNESCO inter-university network said efforts are underway to mobilize international expertise and support for the protection of Isfahan's World Heritage sites following damage sustained

during the recent US-Israeli war of aggression. Speaking at a meeting of Isfahan's Cultural Heritage Association, Mehrdad Hejazi said the network had established a joint UNESCO academic chair involving 11 countries to focus on cultural heritage preservation. Hejazi said the initiative was launched as wartime damage to Iran's historical monuments emerged, adding that discussions were underway to attract international financial and technical assistance for conservation efforts. "These monuments are part of the world's heritage, and we should direct both mate-

rial and non-material resources from outside the country toward their preservation," he said, according to the state news agency IRNA. Hejazi said the network had held several international conferences that resulted in expressions of interest from foreign partners. Japan has indicated its readiness to provide technical cooperation for the conservation of Isfahan's historic monuments, while Turkey has also expressed willingness to participate in preservation projects, he said. Although current restrictions have limited the direct deployment of foreign experts,

consultations are continuing on ways to implement the proposed cooperation, Hejazi added. He also called for greater engagement with Iranian cultural heritage specialists living abroad, saying many researchers and experts overseas had voiced concern over the status of Isfahan's historic sites and could contribute to conservation efforts. Hejazi said recent international discussions had also generated offers of support for preserving parts of Isfahan's cultural heritage, including Armenian historical sites. Raising global awareness of the city's historical significance could help secure

broader international backing for conservation and tourism, he said. Several of Isfahan's historic monuments were damaged during US-Israeli strikes in March. The attacks affected areas surrounding the UNESCO-listed Naqsh-e Jahān Square and the Safavid-era government building. Historic landmarks reported to have sustained damage include the Chehel Sotoun Palace, Ali Qapu Palace, Ashraf Hall, the Timurid Hall, Jebel Khaneh Mansion, which houses the Museum of Decorative Arts, and Rekiḅ Khaneh Mansion, home to the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Public donations up 400% in Ramadan War; nationwide health plans underway

Social Desk

The head of Iran's State Welfare Organization announced that public donations to the agency rose by 400% during the 40-day Ramadan War, defying what was described as normal wartime patterns. Speaking at a news conference marking the 46th anniversary of the State Welfare Organization on Monday, Javad Hosseini said the organization received 1.75 trillion tomans in cash and non-cash donations during the US-Israeli war of aggression despite expectations that charitable giving would decline because of economic uncertainty and public anxiety. "In almost every war, public participation in charitable and voluntary activities falls as people become more concerned about their own financial and personal security," Hosseini said. "During the Ramadan War, however, contributions not only failed to decline but increased significantly." He said the increase represented a sharp break from established wartime patterns observed internationally. "Based on previous experiences of wars around the world, such participation would normally have declined substantially," he said. "Instead, public support increased by 400%, reflecting the solidarity and social cohesion of the Iranian people under difficult circumstances." Hosseini did not provide comparative figures for donations before the conflict but said the total value of contributions collected over the

40-day period reached 1.75 trillion tomans. Beyond the physical destruction associated with armed conflict, Hosseini said authorities were particularly concerned about the long-term psychological and social consequences, warning that untreated trauma could place a heavy burden on individuals and public services. "The visible effects of war, including casualties and damage to infrastructure, industry and employment, are easier to identify," he said. "But one of the most significant consequences is psychological and social trauma, which often continues long after military operations have ended." He said research suggested psychological disorders become increasingly difficult and costly to treat if they are not identified during the first five to six months after a conflict. "If these psychological injuries are not detected and treated during the early months, they become chronic," Hosseini said. "That increases treatment costs, psychological burdens and social problems." To assess the impact of the conflict, the State Welfare Organization launched two nationwide surveys shortly after the fighting began. One survey focused exclusively on older adults, while the second covered other vulnerable groups, including children, adolescents, people with disabilities, women heading households and people living with mental health conditions. According to Hosseini, emotional and psychological problems



emerged as the most common challenges among elderly respondents, outweighing economic concerns. He said more than half of older adults surveyed reported experiencing anxiety related to the conflict. The findings also showed that 87% reported a significant decline in their sense of security in their place of residence, while approximately 70% experienced severe anxiety. Between 37% and 47% also reported poorer sleep quality, he said, describing emotional distress as the dominant consequence for older citizens. The second survey found similarly high levels of psychological strain among other vulnerable groups. "About 70% of participants experienced anxiety during and after the war," Hosseini said, adding that the proportion was even higher among women heading households. Around half of respondents also

reported initial psychological trauma and a reduced sense of personal security, underscoring what he described as the need for rapid intervention. The organization also conducted a separate nationwide psychological screening program, known as "Rasad-e Ravan" (mental monitoring), between June 1 and June 15. Officials had initially expected participation of between 10,000 and 12,000 people. Instead, more than 435,000 people completed the screening, making it one of the largest mental health assessments carried out by the organization, Hosseini said. Women accounted for 56% of participants, while men represented 44%. The largest occupational group consisted of self-employed individuals, representing 24% of respondents. Participants holding high school diplomas made up 29% of those surveyed, while people aged 18 to 25 accounted for 17%. Mar-



Javad Hosseini, the head of Iran's State Welfare Organization, speaks at a news press conference in the capital Tehran on July 14, 2026.
● IRAN DAILY

ried individuals represented 63% of participants. Geographically, the highest participation rates came from the provinces of Fars, Tehran, Gilan, Hamadan and South Khorasan, according to the organization. The screening found that around one in five participants showed signs of severe psychological trauma. "Twenty percent of participants were diagnosed with severe trauma," Hosseini said. He added that between 10% and 11% of respondents had themselves requested specialized counselling or mental health services from the State Welfare Organization. To respond to such needs, the organization has coordinated a network of public institutions to provide professional intervention and treatment. Hosseini said services would be delivered through approximately 3,500 welfare counselling centers, alongside facilities affiliated with medical universities, the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation and the Ministry of Science. Each institution would provide support according to its area of expertise, with the goal of preventing

temporary psychological distress from developing into chronic mental health disorders, he said. The organization also used the news conference to announce a series of welfare and development projects to coincide with Iran's annual Welfare Week, scheduled for July 15-21. Hosseini said 11,733 projects worth a combined 5.298 trillion tomans would be inaugurated during the week. Employment initiatives account for the largest share of the program, with 9,426 new job opportunities expected to be created, he said. The projects also include 2,068 housing units valued at 2.1 trillion tomans, 57 social health projects and 35 social emergency centers. The provinces of Razavi Khorasan, Qom, West Azerbaijan and Khuzestan will receive the largest share of the new projects, according to the organization. Hosseini also announced plans to begin construction on 12 additional projects worth 500 billion tomans next week. Separately, he said 7,000 women heading households had received permanent housing through a joint program involving the State Welfare Organization, the Housing Foundation and other government bodies. He described housing support as one of the organization's most significant achievements in assisting vulnerable families, saying stable housing remained a key component of broader social welfare and poverty reduction efforts.