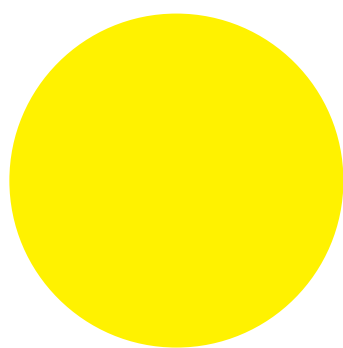


Iranian students collect 10 medals at global math, economics Olympiads



Tehran confirms receiving de-escalation proposals from mediators



Minister: War-damaged desalination plants in south fully operational



They pressured Carter to invade Kharg Island too but he didn't



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Pezeshkian: Iran's economy at center of 'full-scale war' with US



President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd R) speaks at a meeting with senior Judiciary officials in Tehran, Iran on July 20, 2026.

Iran's ground superiority leaves US operation little chance of success

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

In recent days, as US operations against infrastructure in southern Iran have intensified, speculation has grown over the possibility of Washington entering the ground-war phase and attempting to seize parts of Iranian territory, including Kharg Island. But whether such an operation is even feasible — and whether it would deliver the desired gains for Washington — remains an open question. There are also concerns that heavy US military casualties could trigger domestic opposition. In an interview with Iran Daily, international



affairs analyst Emad Abshenas said the United States might use mercenary forces in such an operation, but that its chances of success would be

"very, very low" because of Iran's superiority in ground operations and its familiarity with the region's geography.

IRAN DAILY: What operational and strategic objectives are behind US attacks on Iran's bridges, roads and other transport infrastructure? Is the primary goal to disrupt the movement of troops and equipment, or could these strikes also be part of preparations for a possible ground operation?

ABSHENAS: The United States could have several objectives in doing this. One could be to send Iran the message that "I can commit any war crime I want, and no international body will even criticize me; I do not abide by any international law, and there is nothing you can do about it."

Another possible objective could be to separate the areas connected by those bridges from Iran's coastal regions in a way that would prepare the ground for a ground operation. But the prospect of a ground operation is highly unlikely because the cost to the United States would be extremely high, particularly

in terms of potential casualties. Nevertheless, there have been rumors that the Americans might want to send in some terrorists who have acted as US proxies in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen and other countries as advanced forces, so that they would be the ones killed if there were casualties. Alternatively, US forces could put troops on the ground and then hand the area over to their mercenaries.

The third objective could be for the Americans to say that they can drive up the cost of confronting the United States for Iran and strike areas whose reconstruction would be extremely costly.

Some analyses suggest that if the conflict continues, the United States may seek to seize strategic locations in southern Iran, including some islands. Given that an invading force would be unfamiliar with the geography of this country, does the United States have the capability to carry out such an operation and, if it were to seize territory, to hold on to it?

According to the figures that have emerged, the Americans have suffered

around 35 fatalities over the past week or two, although they deny this and have officially acknowledged only two deaths. This is while they have not even launched a ground operation yet. If they decide to launch a ground operation, they know that Iran has the advantage at this stage. The question of launching a ground attack and putting troops ashore is one thing; holding the ground is another. Iran would then be able to kill a much larger number of American soldiers, and the cost for the US government would go through the roof.

That is why the expectation is that they may try to use mercenaries whom they have employed in various places. In fact, it can be said that the chances of success are either nonexistent or extremely low. The Iranians, after all, will not sit back and do nothing. But the deaths of these mercenaries do not matter to the United States because they are worthless to Washington. Trump simply wants to be able to strike a pose in front of the cameras before the election and claim that he has achieved something. That is what matters to him.

If the United States attempted to seize territory, how intense would Iran's response be, and what costs and consequences would such an operation have for the United States and the region? To what extent could such an operation help reopen the Strait of Hormuz or ensure the security of shipping there? In my view, attempting to seize territory here would be outright suicide for them. The assumption is that they will not be able to seize any part of Iranian territory because Iran will not leave a single one of them alive.

They have tried to put troops on the ground before. They deployed forces in Isfahan and claimed that the operation was carried out to rescue a pilot. But the reality was that they were after uranium, because you do not send 158 aircrafts to rescue a single pilot. In the end, they failed. Over the past week alone, naval forces have also tried several times to approach Iran's islands from the sea and come ashore, but they faced fierce resistance from Iran's armed forces.

Pezeshkian: Iran's economy at center of 'full-scale war' with US

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday that Iran is facing a "full-scale war" in which the economy and people's livelihoods has become the main battleground with the enemy. "The reality is that today the Islamic Republic of Iran is engaged in a full-scale war. Today's war is not merely a war of missiles; the enemy has concluded that it cannot force the Iranian nation to surrender through military attacks," Pezeshkian said during a meeting of the country's Supreme Judicial Council. He described preserving economic stability and safeguarding public support as among the country's top priorities under economic warfare, saying that the economy and people's livelihoods had emerged as the key arena of confrontation. The United States violated a recent

memorandum of understanding reached between the two countries by launching new aggression against Iran since July 11, hitting military sites, residential buildings and infrastructure.

It has also reinstated a blockade on Iranian ports, which had been removed under the agreement, to intensify economic pressure on the country.

"On the military front, Armed Forces are defending the country with strength, but if the economic pressures lead to social discontent, the social capital in support of the establishment could be damaged," the Iranian president warned.

Referring to the country's complex circumstances, Pezeshkian said Iran had to tackle external threats while addressing domestic problems at the same time.

He said Iran's enemies are "using all their capabilities" to block the coun-



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) speaks during a meeting of the country's Supreme Judicial Council in Tehran, Iran, on July 20, 2026.

● [president.ir](#)

try's path to progress through various means because they did not want "an independent, powerful and successful country" to emerge in the region. Iran therefore had to counter the enemy plots while simultaneously resolving its internal challenges, the president added.

Pezeshkian said unity, mutual understanding and decision-making based on collective wisdom were essential for managing the country's difficult conditions.

He also reaffirmed Iran's determination to defend its national interests while acknowledging the costs involved. "We will stand to the last breath in defending the country and the nation's interests, and we have



no doubt about this path, but at the same time we must be realistic and

accept the natural consequences of this steadfastness," he said.

Tehran confirms receiving de-escalation proposals from mediators

International Desk

Iran confirmed the receipt of proposals from "certain" mediators aimed at preventing further escalation of tensions with the United States.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said during his weekly press briefing on Monday that mediators are actively striving to prevent further escalation and have conveyed proposals to Tehran, but he did not give further details.

He added that while Iran's armed forces continue to respond "firmly and decisively" to the source of the US aggression, the country's diplomatic apparatus is fully aware of its duties and spares no effort to fulfill them.

The Iranian spokesperson emphasized that the diplomatic apparatus remains fully aligned with the armed forces and continues to pursue its duties in defending the country's interests.

The United States has perpetrated numerous violations against Iranian territory since April 8, when US President Donald Trump announced a unilateral ceasefire in the latest bout of wholesale American-Israeli aggression targeting the Islamic Republic.

The violations continued even after Washington and Tehran signed a Pakistan-mediated memorandum of understanding in June, whose first clause clearly mandates cessation of aggres-



sion on all fronts.

Since July 11, the US has launched new strikes on Iran on the pretext of alleged Iran's attacks on ships in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, which is a major source of contention between the two countries.

Baqaei's confirmation follows reports that Qatar has floated a 10-day ceasefire plan between Iran and the US following Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's recent visit to Doha.

Baqaei said Iran has never been the first party to breach the war-ending MoU; however, Washington's breaches of its commitments prompted Tehran's reciprocal response.

US not seeking de-escalation

Iran's Parliament speaker also reacted to remarks by the US Secretary of

State Marco Rubio claiming that his country remains open to a diplomatic solution with Iran, saying that the US military build-up in the region proves Washington does not seek de-escalation.

"Americans keep bringing new military equipment to the region and claim they want to stop the war. They have bet on our intelligence being as low as their own IQ," Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said in a post on X.

"We have reached the stage of mastery in recognizing these American games, and on that basis, we have prepared ourselves. Actions must substantiate claims, not contradict them."

Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni also arrived in mediator Pakistan's capital on Monday at the invitation of the country's Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi.

During the visit, the two sides are due to discuss ways to deepen bilateral ties, including strengthening border cooperation and expanding collaboration in trade, transit and agriculture through a series of meetings and joint sessions, according to Tasnim news agency.

Iraq's government also said its prime minister will soon visit Iran and Turkey as part of efforts to strengthen relations with neighboring countries, advance bilateral issues and help reduce regional tensions.

'Siege for siege': Yemen slaps maritime blockade on Saudi Arabia

International Desk

Yemen declared a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia in a tit-for-tat response to the ultraconservative kingdom's years-long embargo, with the country's military spokesman stressing that it will come into effect immediately.

In a statement on Monday, Yemeni armed forces spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Saree announced "a maritime embargo against the criminal Saudi enemy, based on the equation of 'siege for siege,'" adding that "it will come into force from the moment this statement is issued."

According to the statement, the blockade was imposed in response to Saudi Arabia's continued "unjust and oppressive siege on our dear people for nearly 12 years, plundering our resources and imposing a comprehensive blockade on [the country's] ports and airports by land, sea, and air" as well as the recent attacks on the Sana'a International Airport.

The spokesman affirmed the Yemeni armed forces' "complete readiness for all options," warning that "any foolish act" by Riyadh will be met with a "harsh" response.

Tensions flared earlier this month when Saudi Arabia tried to prevent the return of an Iranian plane

carrying a delegation of Yemeni officials, who had traveled to Tehran for the funeral of Iran's martyred Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. The plane was diverted after the Sana'a airport was bombed and landed safely in the city of Hudaydah. The Saudi-backed government in south claimed responsibility for the attack.

Following the bombing, the Ansarullah resistance movement, who blamed Riyadh for the attack, fired missiles at an airport in the southern Saudi Arabian city of Abha.

Hizam al-Assad, a senior member of Ansarullah's political bureau, warned that Yemen is prepared to escalate to all-out war if the 11-year siege of Yemen is not lifted. He said it is unacceptable for Riyadh to continue exporting oil and purchasing weapons to bomb and blockade Yemen while the Yemeni people remain silent.

Al-Assad warned that Yemen's armed forces are ready to target Saudi oil facilities, refineries, and export ports with missiles and drones if the blockade continues. Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies launched the blockade on Yemen as part of a full-scale war on March 26, 2015, with military, political, and logistical support from the United States and other Western states.

Fresh Iranian strikes lash American bases across region

International Desk

Iran's Armed Forces kept up its attacks on US military bases in regional countries on Monday, with its Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) announcing they had hit targets in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Syria.

In Syria, Iranian forces launched "a surprise attack on the enemy special operations command center in the al-Tanf region," according to the IRGC statement.

The US withdrew its troops from al-Tanf in February.

In Jordan, the IRGC said it targeted US military aircraft stationed at Aqaba Airport "with ballistic missiles, causing severe damage to a number of them."

The IRGC also said they hit US military targets based in Kuwait, including an early-warning radar system that was "completely destroyed."

Later in the day, the IRGC issued another

statement, announcing new strikes by its naval forces on Bahrain and Kuwait.

Kuwait's Army said Monday its air defenses were engaging with drone attacks following Iran's strikes.

Bahrain's Interior Ministry also said that its air raid sirens had sounded and urged citizens and residents to head to "the nearest safe place."

Iran's new attacks came after the US launched fresh aggression against Iran. In Bushehr, Governor-general Mohammad Mozaffari told state news agency IRNA that several locations in Bushehr city were hit by American enemy's projectiles.

In East Azarbaijan Province in the northwest, the head of the local crisis management unit Majid Farshi told IRNA that "one person was martyred and several others injured" in an attack there. Areas in West Azarbaijan were also targeted in the US strikes.

Hamed Saffari, director-general of crisis management for the province, said several people were injured in the strikes.

An attack on the Iranian city of Shiraz was also reported by the deputy governor-general of Iran's Fars Province.

"The US launched an aerial attack on one of the areas in Shiraz, it resulted in no casualties, and the situation is under control," the official told state TV. In Hormuz, meanwhile, sailors abandoned a vessel set on fire in an attack, according to the UK Maritime Trade Operations agency.

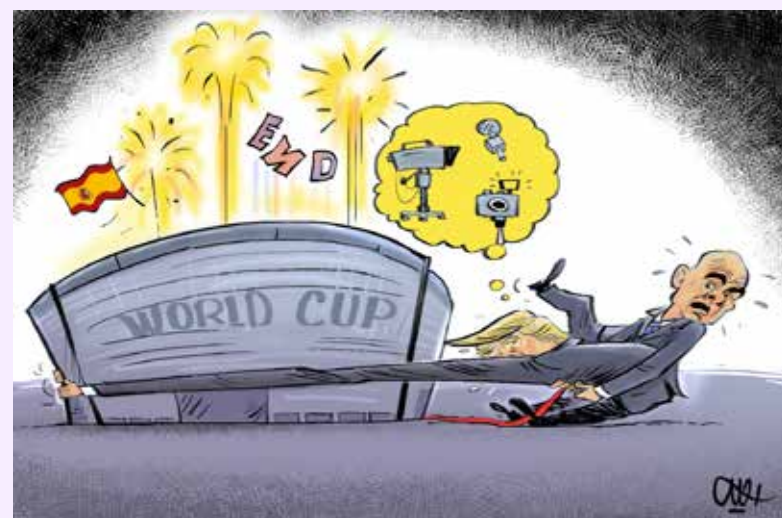
The IRGC had earlier said that two oil tankers trying to transit the strait "exploded and were brought to a halt," according to a statement reported by Tasnim news agency.

On Friday, Iran's Health Ministry reported that 50 people had been killed in recent fighting and more than 500 wounded.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Minister: War-damaged desalination plants in south fully operational

Economy Desk

Iran's Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi said on Sunday that all desalination plants damaged in recent US strikes in the country's south are fully operational, ensuring no islands are facing water shortages. Aliabadi, accompanied by the executive vice president and the minister of roads and urban development, visited the southern Hormozgan Province on Sunday to attend a crisis meeting and inspect strike-damaged areas. "Residents in the southern provinces are enduring severe hardships as extreme heat waves compound the pressure from the recent attacks," he said. After a pause of several weeks, the United States resumed strikes on Iran's infrastructure on July 11, after three vessels in the Strait of Hormuz were targeted. The country has remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks in late February, particularly targeting civilians and infrastruc-

ture during a 40-day conflict. Aliabadi acknowledged that the strikes targeted infrastructure directly affecting civilians, but credited the round-the-clock efforts of his staff and public cooperation for maintaining stable utility services. "All desalination plants in the region are in operation, and currently, none of the country's islands are facing water shortages," he said, adding that the water and electricity supply situation in Bandar Abbas is also stable. Detailing the restoration of the power grid, the minister noted that four 400-kilovolt and two 230-kilovolt transmission lines damaged during the strikes have been fully repaired, returning the regional network to normal conditions. Aliabadi urged the public to conserve energy, stating that turning off unnecessary lights and air conditioners helps supply power to vital centers like hospitals and supports those on the front lines. The country was already experiencing energy shortages prior

to the attacks, a situation exacerbated by the conflict and peak summer heat.

Legal ramifications

Addressing the legal ramifications of the strikes, Aliabadi said much of the documentation on previous attacks had already been prepared and submitted to the relevant authorities. He noted that targeting water and electricity facilities, which directly serve civilian needs, constitutes a war crime. The documentation of the recent attacks is being meticulously finalized to be submitted to relevant international courts and legal bodies, supplementing reports from previous strikes that have already been sent to authorities. Highlighting the rapid recovery efforts on the ground, Hashem Amini, CEO of the Iran Water and Wastewater Engineering Company, announced that the Bonji desalination plant in western Jask County was restored to operation just 24 hours after sustaining damage from a US missile strike on its



power and pump facilities. According to ILNA, Amini said that initial technical assessments had estimated that temporary repairs to the pumping station would take at least a

week. However, through round-the-clock efforts, rapid coordination, and the field presence of experts, the facility was brought back online in a single day. "This action prevented wide-

spread disruption in the drinking water supply, and services to more than 10,000 residents of 20 villages in Jask County continued without interruption," Amini stated.

Iran seeks partial recovery of war-hit gas output within months



Economy Desk

Iran expects to restore part of the natural gas production capacity lost during the war within the next few months, a senior presidential official said on Monday, while urging energy conservation to help the country overcome supply imbalances. Speaking at a crisis management committee meeting in Asaluyeh, Executive Vice President Mohammad Jafar Qaempanah said the enemy attacks had taken about 230 million cubic meters of the country's gas production capacity offline, IRNA reported. He said oil industry specialists were expected to restore 100 million cubic meters of that capacity within the next few months. The loss is significant compared with Iran's daily gas production of about 650 million cubic meters and has added to the country's existing gas imbalance, he said. Iran holds the world's second-largest natural gas reserves. The country has remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks on the country in late February, particularly targeting civilians and infrastructure during a 40-day conflict. After a pause of several weeks, attacks on Iran's infrastructure resumed on July 11. Israeli air strikes in March damaged several gas-processing facilities along the coast of Bushehr Province. Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said in June that Iran had restored about 30 million cubic

meters of gas-processing capacity lost during the 40-day war. Qaempanah said that none of Iran's oil and gas export terminals had been shut despite the attacks and that industry workers had prevented production from coming to a halt. He said the government's priority was to ensure stable electricity and gas supplies so that industrial production, particularly in manufacturing and petrochemicals, could continue without disruption and employment would not be affected. He also said the government was pressing ahead with the expansion of solar power plants and that part of the new generating capacity had already been connected to the national grid to help improve electricity network stability. Iran's installed renewable power generation capacity has exceeded 5,400 megawatts, according to the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA). Jafar Mohammadnezhad Sigaroudi, the organization's deputy investment director, said on Monday that the government's target of reaching 7,000 MW by the end of the summer remained in place despite constraints on imported equipment. "At present, around 1,000 to 1,500 MW of renewable power plants are under construction, and most of the equipment for these projects has either been secured or is in the supply pipeline. If alternative procurement routes become operational, achieving the 7,000 MW target by the end of the summer will not be out of reach," he said.

Tehran, Islamabad edge closer to halal trade agreement



Economy Desk

Iran and Pakistan have moved closer to signing a cooperation agreement aimed at facilitating bilateral trade in halal products, Iran's state broadcaster reported on Monday. Representatives of Iran's National Standards Organization and the Pakistan Halal Authority (PHA) agreed on a framework for cooperation during an expert-level meeting attended by officials from the Iranian Embassy in Pakistan. They also reviewed a draft memorandum of understanding and

agreed that, following revisions and the completion of legal procedures in both countries, the final text would be prepared for signature by the relevant authorities, IRIB reported. The two sides presented their national halal systems and institutional capabilities and agreed to use the standards and procedures of the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) as the basis for expanding international cooperation and promoting greater harmonization of halal systems. Under Pakistani regulations, food products exported to the country must be accompanied by a valid halal certificate. The agreement could help facilitate Iranian exports and expand bilateral trade in halal products. Halal refers to products and practices permissible under Islamic law, particularly food and beverages prepared in accordance with

religious guidelines. Despite the rapid growth of the global halal industry, Iran's share of the market remains limited. Speaking at the National Halal Industry Conference in Tehran in May last year, Ebrahim Ebrahimi, director-general of the legal and parliamentary affairs office at Iran's National Standards Organization, said the global halal industry's turnover had reached \$6 trillion in 2022 and was projected to rise to \$8 trillion by 2025, while Iran's share remained below 1%. "While halal standards are rooted in jurisprudential principles, they must be designed for acceptance across all nations, particularly Islamic countries," Ebrahimi said. The latest State of the Global Islamic Economy report by Dinar Standard estimated Muslim consumer spending across the Islamic economy at \$2.60 trillion in 2024 and projected it to reach \$3.56 trillion by 2029.

TENDER NO.: 08-38-0440006

Second Announcement

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

Item	Material Description	Quantity	UNIT
01	ROCK BITS, JET TYPE, LESS NOZZLES 8-1/2 IN., I.A.D.C.2.1.4	85	NO
02	ROCK BITS, JET TYPE, LESS NOZZLES 8-3/8 IN., I.A.D.C.2.1.4	50	NO
03	ROCK BITS, JET TYPE, LESS NOZZLES 5-7/8 IN., I.A.D.C.2.1.4	45	NO
04	NOZZLES FOR SIZE 8-3/8 TO 12-1/4 INCH	140	NO
05	NOZZLES FOR SIZE 5-5/8 TO 6-3/4 INCH	50	NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 14,145/51 EURO or 23,983,500,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

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

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They pressured Carter to invade Kharg Island too but he didn't



By Martin Di Caro
Independent journalist

OPINION

The president was in a humiliating bind.

The American people were obsessed with the harrowing images of blindfolded and bound hostages beamed into their homes by the nightly newscasts, and they prayed their government would find a way to free them. Desperate for a way out, some White House advisers prodded the president to go to war.

This is not the story of the Trump administration, which is trapped in a quagmire of the president's own creation. It is the dilemma that swallowed President Jimmy Carter from November 4, 1979, when hundreds of zealous Iranian students overran the US embassy in Tehran and took 63 captives. Three more were seized at a nearby building. Of the many possible parallels between then and now, one is the importance of a small coral island in the northern Persian Gulf about 20 miles from the Iranian coast. Kharg Island is home to a major oil terminal through which nearly all Iranian oil exports pass. President Donald Trump says he's thinking about seizing it, a threat he has made numerous times since he launched a war with Iran on February 28.

But Trump is not the first president to mull such an operation. In a largely forgotten footnote to his presidency, Jimmy Carter was presented with plans to capture the island but rejected them. The reasons for his restraint still hold force today.

In a top-secret memo in late December 1979, national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski asked Carter "to consider military actions which contribute to [Ayatollah Khomeini's] downfall, and thus secure the release of the hostages." Seizing Kharg and two other islands near the Strait of Hormuz's entrance could, in Brzezinski's estimation, impose "a protracted humiliation on Khomeini, which could only be terminated through the release of the hostages." He hoped to "mesh" military action "with covert political action designed to create an alternative to Khomeini." In other words, regime change.

As the Washington Post revealed the following March, the risky plan called for amphibious assault ships to steam up the Persian Gulf and disembark US Marines. "Once on the island, they or technicians with them would take over the oil lines," the Post reported, noting that backers of the plan hoped that cutting off oil revenue "would put tremendous pressure on the Iranian leader without reaping the whirlwind of criticism" that would result from bombing mainland Iran.

As Edward Luce wrote in his 2025 biography of Brzezinski, Carter dismissed the idea of deploying military force to pressure Ayatollah Khomeini to free the captives: "Such actions would only rally Iranians around Khomeini, he said." Brzezinski grew frustrated at Carter's "stubborn instinct to do what he thought was right, even if it damaged his reelection prospects," Luce noted.

Four months later, on April 10, 1980, with the captives still in captivity and Americans obsessing over their fate, Brzezinski wrote another memo to Carter lamenting the lack of diplomatic progress and proposing military strikes.

In Brzezinski's six-step plan to save the captives, step 5 was "Closure of Kharg



National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski (standing) briefs former US president Jimmy Carter (sitting) on the situation in Iran on January 4, 1980.

FLICKR

Island and/or occupation of the Tunbs and Abu Musa at the mouth of the Persian Gulf". Once again, Carter chose restraint.

"President Carter recognized that military action in the Persian Gulf was too risky and could trigger a wider war," University of Texas historian Jeremi Suri tells RS. "The best leverage Carter had was to try to work with the new government behind the scenes to protect and release American personnel." Luce tells RS that Carter had a "radically different" view of military force than Brzezinski. "In spite of the latter's ceaseless efforts to get Carter to take kinetic action — seizing Kharg Island, imposing a naval blockade, bombing Iranian oil refineries, and various other proposals — Carter did not come close to approving military action, except for Operation Eagle Claw. No US president before or since has been so reluctant to deploy the Pentagon."

Under withering pressure to do something to save the American captives, Carter authorized on April 24, 1980, the long-planned Eagle Claw rescue mission that crashed and burned in a desert 200 miles from Tehran, another humiliation piled upon a seemingly impotent administration. Eagle Claw's failure led to the same consequence that bombing Iran or seizing Kharg Island might have produced, according to historian John Ghazvinian. "If there had been any possibility of a diplomatic breakthrough in the hostage crisis, it was now gone," Ghazvinian wrote in his history of US-Iran relations.

There are no captives to rescue in Iran today. President Trump is captive instead to his judgment, having attacked Iran twice in eight months during negotiations. Trump may be desperate

to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, but Iran's new hardline leadership cadre has proven itself capable of withstanding immense pressure. Seizing Kharg Island as leverage, therefore, seems destined to fail. This won't stop some in Washington from supporting it.

Appearing on CBS' "Face the Nation" on July 12, Former CENTCOM Commander Ret. Gen. Frank McKenzie echoed Brzezinski's long-discarded advice. "What we're talking about is modifying the views and actions of an extreme hardline regime," and seizing Kharg Island could well do the trick, McKenzie argued. "Possession of Iranian soil would be a significant factor in future negotiations with Iran."

National security analysts agree that the US military can capture the island, but doing so would create more military and diplomatic problems — and many more American casualties.

"An invasion of Kharg would be fraught with danger, no matter what kind of forces are used. An amphibious landing would include a good deal of immediate support in the form of naval fire and aviation. But that also means there would be a flotilla of ships parked well within range of Iranian missiles and drones based on the mainland," said Dan Grazier of the Stimson Center. "The American ground forces would be under constant threat from the same Iranian assets."

Harrison Mann, a former US Army major and Defense Intelligence Agency official who now works at the progressive group Win Without War, says McKenzie's reasoning is divorced from reality. "He's imagining that if the US takes an Iranian island, it becomes a bargaining chip. That idea is predicated on the assumption that taking an island is less costly for the US than for Iran. Putting

a bunch of US troops on an island next to Iran becomes a casualty-generating machine."

It took until the last day of Carter's presidency, with the help of Algerian intermediaries and a deal to unfreeze nearly \$8 billion in Iranian assets, to free the 52 remaining captives. Carter had been, Ghazvinian wrote, seemingly prepared to stake his entire presidency on his ability to get them released. Through it all, he avoided war even as his political career imploded.

We might contrast Carter's attitude with that of Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who never miss an opportunity to remind us of their toughness and willingness to use massive violence to bend Iran to their will. Their delusions are no match for geography.

"The parallel with today is that neither Brzezinski nor Carter — nor anyone in the administration — understood the ayatollah's psychology, let alone the blood and martyrdom that suffused Shiite fundamentalist ideology. They kept misreading Khomeini's resolve," Luce tells RS. "Seizing Kharg Island, as Brzezinski kept urging, and Trump keeps being tempted to do (he has repeatedly raised it in several phone calls with me), would not be the Hail Mary of their dreams. The continuity here is in US misreading of Iran."

Trump has threatened to destroy Iran's power plants and other civilian infrastructure nine times, only to step back from the precipice while blustering about imminent deals to restore peace and commerce. Any prudent minds left in Trump's inner circle might take a cue from Carter and tell him to avoid Kharg Island at all costs.

The article first appeared on Responsible Statecraft.

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Iranian tanker docks at the platform of the oil facility in the Kharg Island, on the shore of the Persian Gulf. The island was responsible for 90% of Iran's oil exports before the US-Israeli war that started on February 28, 2026.

ATTA KENARE/AFP



Trouble with Persia? Ask the Romans



By John Limbert
US embassy staffer held
captive in Iran, 1979-1981

OPINION

Donald Trump is far from the first foreign ruler to come to grief after launching an ill-advised military operation against Iran. At least four Roman triumvirs and emperors, driven by hubris and ignorance, launched military attacks on Persia that ended in disaster. In each failure, there are lessons for our own time.

Crassus: a prop in a Greek tragedy

In 53 BCE, Roman Triumvir and real estate magnate Marcus Licinius Crassus launched a campaign against the Parthians in search of military glory to match that of his fellow triumvirs, Caesar and Pompey. According to Plutarch's account, Crassus ignored the counsel of his Armenian ally King Artavasdes, who advised him to send his forces from Syria into Parthia via a northern route through Armenia, where mountainous terrain would favor Roman infantry. Crassus, whose only military experience was suppressing a slave revolt, convinced himself he was a military genius on a level with his fellow triumvirs. He ignored Artavasdes' advice and led his legions directly east across the North Syrian plains. At the famous battle of Carrhae (modern Harran in southern Turkey), the Parthians caught Crassus' army in the open, and their mounted archers, equipped with stirrups and with an effective supply chain of arrows, destroyed seven Roman legions. In Plutarch's account, the Parthians killed Crassus, and a messenger took his head to the Persian king, who was visiting the Armenian capital to celebrate a marriage alliance between his son and King Artavasdes' sister. There it became a prop in a performance of Euripides' drama *The Bacchae*.

Marc Antony: beaten by general winter

Seventeen years later, in 36 BCE, another triumvir, Marc Antony, sought both military glory and revenge for Carrhae when he led an expedition against Parthia. King Artavasdes of Armenia, having once more switched sides, supported Antony's advance through his territory into the Persian province of Media Atropatene (today's Iranian Azerbaijan). But Antony's army lost its baggage train to Parthian attacks, leaving it with limited supplies. After an indecisive attack on the provincial center of Praaspa (today's Maragheh, in northwestern Iran) the Romans were forced to make a disastrous winter retreat through the mountains of Azerbaijan and Armenia. In the end, Marc Antony had not only failed to take revenge for Carrhae, but his folly had also cost about 30,000 Roman lives.

A captured Valerian: And an unexpected national hero

Nearly 300 years later, in the early third century, the powerful Sassanian dynasty replaced the Parthians in Persia. Rome faced this strong rival at a time of internal chaos and civil wars — the so-called "crisis of the third century". As Rome endured frequent military rebellions and changes of emperor, the powerful kings Ardashir I (r. 224–242) and Shapur I (r. 240–270) led the Persians. Syria, Armenia, and border towns such as Amida (today's Diyarbakir in southeastern Turkey) became battlegrounds. By the middle of the century, a rising Persia and a weakened Rome were



fighting for control of Armenia, long ruled by the Parthians, bitter enemies of the Sassanians. Shapur I first defeated Emperor Gordian in 244 and forced his successor, Philip the Arab (r. 244–249), to pay tribute and cede Armenia and Mesopotamia. Most memorably, in 260, Shapur defeated a Roman army at Edessa (today's Urfa) and captured Emperor Valerian. The capture of a Roman emperor was a momentous event in the ancient world, and Shapur wanted it properly commemorated. Numerous rock carvings on the Iranian plateau (see Naqsh-e Rostam) depict a mounted Shapur triumphant over two defeated Romans: Valerian and Philip the Arab. During the recent fighting in Iran, the Islamic Republic revived this image to celebrate its "victories" over the US and Israel.

Julian: The myth of regime change

In the fourth century, the Romans repeated earlier mistakes by pursuing regime change in Persia. They backed an exiled Sassanian pretender, Prince Hormozd (known in Western sources as Hormisdas), a relative of King Shapur II (r. 309–379). Hormozd had spent decades in Con-

stantinople, where he made influential friends and became fluent in Greek. He persuaded his Roman supporters and Emperor Julian (r. 360–363) that, if he returned to Persia with Roman military backing, resistance would collapse, Persian nobles would turn against Shapur and welcome him as king. Despite unfavorable omens from sacrifices at Antioch, Julian launched his invasion in 363. According to the account of the Roman soldier and historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who accompanied Julian on his eastern operation, the campaign ended in disaster. The Persian cities remained loyal to Shapur and closed their gates to Hormisdas. Rather than get bogged down in sieges, Julian continued to the Sassanian capital of Ctesiphon near present-day Baghdad. After inconclusive battles there, he retreated northward and was mortally wounded in a battle near Samarra. His successor, Jovian, continued the retreat north. But, blocked from crossing the Tigris into Roman territory, Jovian made a humiliating peace (a Memorandum of Understanding?) with the Persians. In return for an unhindered retreat, Jovian gave up Rome's interest in Armenia, withdrew from five provinces, and gave up

important border fortresses, including the strategic town of Nisibis (today's Nusaybin in southeastern Turkey).

Lessons to be learned

At least four Roman emperors met disaster in Persia and their fates should offer lessons for our times. Crassus met his doom because he ignored his ally, obsessed over the triumphs of his rivals, and imagined that his becoming rich by real estate speculation made him a military genius. Marc Antony ignored geography and underestimated his enemy. Valerian both underestimated the enemy and overestimated Roman military strength. Julian was misled when a Persian exile prince, who had lived abroad for decades and spoke fluent Greek, claimed that Persia would welcome him as a liberator. It may be too much to expect, but today can an Israeli leader who considers himself an expert on history and an American leader who considers himself a military genius apply those talents to avoid the mistakes of their Roman predecessors? So far, they have gone down the same paths with the same disastrous results.

The article first appeared on *Responsible Statecraft*.



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US President Donald Trump stands at attention as a US Army carry team moves a flag-draped transfer case at Dover Air Force Base on March 7, 2026, in Dover, Delaware. Six soldiers from the 103rd Sustainment Command were killed in action by an Iranian drone strike on March 1 in Port Shuaiba, Kuwait, during Operation Epic Fury.

● MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

Trouble with Persia? Ask the Romans



By John Limbert
US embassy staffer held
captive in Iran, 1979-1981

OPINION

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● MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

Piazza questions Iran players' desire after dismal VNL campaign

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Roberto Piazza has openly questioned his players' desire and fighting spirit after the national team endured a dreadful Volleyball Nations League (VNL) campaign, warning that the country's future in the sport will be at risk unless the underlying problems are addressed.

Iran wrapped up the tournament with a 3-1 defeat against Turkey on Sunday, finishing with just three wins and nine losses. The result left Piazza's side 14th in the 18-team standings, narrowly avoiding relegation only because Canada posted an even worse record.

The outcome marked one of Iran's poorest VNL performances in recent years and fell well short of expectations after many had hoped the team would build on the progress made during Piazza's first season in charge and challenge for a first VNL Finals berth in four years.

Instead, Iran spent much of the tournament looking over its shoulder in the relegation battle rather than competing for a place in the knockout rounds.

The latest preliminary-round setback also carried significant consequences beyond the final standings, as Iran slipped to 19th in the FIVB World Rankings – its lowest position in more than a decade and a stark reminder of the team's decline from its years among the world's elite.

Piazza, however, insisted that technical shortcomings were not the team's biggest concern.

The Italian coach said after the match that the main problem with his team was that it "gives



up too early."

"It is something I cannot accept and cannot understand. It doesn't matter who is on the court or on the bench. What I see is a team that stops fighting far too early." Iran appeared on course for a positive finish after taking the opening set against Turkey with an aggressive display, but the match quickly slipped away. "I think we started the match really well," Piazza said. "We won the first set and were in the right mood.

"But at 2-2, we lost one ball. After a very long rally, Morteza hit the ball out from the back court. Then we made a few simple mistakes, and from that moment we started to give up." Piazza's frustration was evident even during the match. During a

timeout, television cameras captured the coach telling his players: "If you don't want to play, get off the court."

Afterward, he expanded on what he believes is a deeper psychological issue affecting the squad. "My main question is: Where is the desire to improve?" he said. "That is my first question." The Italian, who was appointed to oversee a new generation following the gradual departure of Iran's golden generation, said the team's mentality had become a recurring concern rather than an isolated problem.

He pointed to last year's World Championship campaign, where Iran reached the knockout stage but benefited from a favorable group.

"We played well at the World

Championship – not great, but well," Piazza said. "We also have to be honest. We were a little lucky because we didn't have a very difficult group. We struggled even against the Philippines in our last group match before playing well against Serbia.

"But against the Czech Republic, once again, after taking the lead, we lost one particular point and suddenly surrendered." Piazza said acknowledging the problem is only the first step.

"We have to accept this, but more importantly we have to understand it," he said. "If we cannot understand why this happens, then we will have no future, because until we understand the situation correctly, we will never be able to find a solution."

Iran's disappointing campaign



Iranian players are seen in action against Turkey in the FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League in Belgrade, Serbia, on July 19, 2026.

● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir

came despite extensive preparations organized by the Iranian Volleyball Federation. The squad spent nearly two months training overseas and remained abroad throughout its preparation period instead of returning home between camps.

Although some observers criticized the lack of warm-up matches before the VNL, the federation faced exceptional logistical challenges as Iran was dealing with the impact of the recent conflict, making it difficult to arrange high-quality friendlies. Similar

circumstances also affected the national football team's preparations ahead of the FIFA World Cup.

With the federation providing favorable training conditions despite those challenges, much of the criticism has shifted toward the performances of the players and coaching staff.

While Piazza has continued to stress that the team's long-term objective remains qualification for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, the VNL exposed worrying deficiencies in confidence and resilience. In several matches, Iran struggled to respond after falling behind, lacking the trademark fighting spirit that once defined one of Asia's most successful volleyball nations.

The contrast with Iran's so-called "Golden Generation" — led by stars such as Saeid Marouf, Seyed Mohammad Mousavi, Amir Ghafour, Shahram Mahmoudi and Adel Gholami — is increasingly apparent. That team earned a reputation for battling until the final point against the world's best, whereas the current squad has repeatedly appeared to lose belief once momentum shifts.

Next up for Piazza and his young squad is the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship in Fukuoka, Japan, in September.

As if Iran needed added motivation to chase a fifth continental title in eight editions and make amends for its heartbreaking defeat against Japan in the 2023 final on home soil, an Olympic berth will also be at stake, with the tournament winner securing a place at the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

Asian Junior Judo Championships:

Banaeian settles for silver as Iran bags five medals

Sports Desk

Mohammad-Pouria Banaeian settled for silver in the men's +100kg class on Sunday as Iran collected five medals at the Asian Junior Judo Championships in Amman, Jordan.

The final-day results took Iran's overall haul to nine medals across the two age categories in the Jordanian capital after the country had claimed four medals—including two golds—in the cadet competition last week. Banaeian began his campaign with a victory over Kyrgyzstan's Ilia Sukhinin before defeating Chinese Taipei's Chen Hsing-Jen

to advance to the final, where he lost to Uzbekistan's Fazliddin Rafikov.

Elsewhere in the men's competition, Sepehr Norouzi and Abolfazl Mohebbi shared bronze in the -90kg category.

Mahshid Safari, meanwhile, recovered from a quarterfinal defeat to eventual silver medalist Taibanganbi Chanu Khaidem of India to claim bronze in the women's -70kg division after beating Uzbekistan's Nigina Saparboeva.

Samira Khadem had opened Iran's account on the penultimate day of the tournament by winning bronze in the women's

-63kg class.

The five-medal haul saw Iran finish seventh in the team standings.

Uzbekistan topped the table with 15 medals, including seven golds, while Kazakhstan and India finished second and third with six and one gold medals, respectively.

Mahsa Shakibaei and Sobhan Hakimi, Iran's two cadet gold medalists in Amman, also targeted medals in the junior competition but finished empty-handed in their respective events.

Shakibaei, who made history by winning Iran's first-ever wom-

en's gold medal at continental showcase, narrowly missed out on the podium in the -52kg event after losing to Uzbekistan's Sabrina Azamatova in the bronze-medal contest.

Hakimi, meanwhile, endured a disappointing campaign in the men's -81kg class, suffering a repechage defeat to Kyrgyzstan's Nurmukhammed Muratov to finish seventh.

Hossein Novin (-81kg) and Amirreza Alizadeh (-90kg) had added two bronze medals to Iran's tally in the cadet competition, helping the country finish third in the team standings behind Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.



Iran's Mohammad-Pouria Banaeian won the men's +100kg silver medal at the Asian Junior Judo Championships in Amman, Jordan.

● JUA



● AHF

Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship:

Iran undone 28-27 by holders Japan

Sports Desk

Iran suffered a heartbreaking 28-27 defeat against two-time defending champions Japan at the Asian Men's Junior Handball Championship in Chuzhou, China, on Monday. The closely contested Group B clash was evenly balanced throughout, with the teams locked at 14-14 at halftime after an intense opening period. Neither side was able to establish a decisive advantage after the break, and Iran stayed within

touching distance until the closing moments. However, Japan edged the encounter by a single goal to maintain its winning run, while Iran was left to rue a missed opportunity to take points from one of Asia's traditional powerhouses. The result saw Japan leapfrog Iran into third place in the group standings with five points, thanks to a superior goal difference.

Iran will still hope to secure a top-four finish and a quarterfinal berth in a daunting group that

also features Kuwait and Qatar - the two most decorated teams in the competition's history - as well as South Korea, the runner-up in the previous edition. Iran will conclude the preliminary phase against bottom side India at the Chuzhou International Handball Hall today.

Iran began its campaign with an impressive 29-27 victory over five-time champions Kuwait, but suffered a 29-28 defeat to South Korea before sharing the spoils with the UAE in a 25-25 draw

on Friday. Iran then returned to winning ways with a 26-25 victory over Qatar on Sunday.

Iran finished fifth in the 2024 edition, while its best-ever result came in 2008, when it claimed the silver medal after losing to Kuwait in the final.

The championship also serves as Asia's qualifier for the 2027 IHF Men's Junior (U21) World Championship in North Macedonia, with the four semifinalists securing places at the global showcase.

Find adventure, tranquility in Shemshak

Iranica Desk

For many people, hearing the name Shemshak immediately brings images of snow-covered mountains and ski slopes to mind — a destination where athletes and winter enthusiasts travel every year for skiing, sledding, and enjoying the white landscapes of the Alborz Mountains. Yet Shemshak is not only a winter destination. This mountainous region on the southern slopes of the Alborz reveals another face in spring and summer: a green, cool, and peaceful retreat from Tehran's heat.

The village of Shemsh and the wider Shemshak area offer a unique combination of mountain landscapes, local history, clear springs, and refreshing weather. From old mines to an international ski resort, from the well-known Aftab Nadideh Spring to a Safavid-era shrine, every corner of the region reflects the long relationship between local communities and their mountainous environment, according to IRNA.

Located northeast of Tehran, Shemshak lies along the scenic Lavasan–Fasham–Meygun–Shemshak–Darbandsar route, one of the most beautiful mountain roads in Tehran Province. The winding road offers different landscapes throughout the year, with each season bringing its own colors and atmosphere. The Shemshak area consists of several villages and neighborhoods, each with its own natural attractions and character.

However, they all share common features: clean air, towering mountains, clear springs, and welcoming local communities.



Among these settlements, Shemsh is considered one of the oldest and most traditional villages in the area. The name “Shemshak” is believed to be linked to the word “Shemsh,” which historically referred to mines or valuable stones and metals. The region has long been associated with mining activities, and traces of this heritage remain part of the area's identity.

In the not-so-distant past, Shemshak was a destination for miners and mountaineers who came to the highlands for work or recreation. Although little remains of the old mining sites to-

day, the region's pristine nature and numerous springs continue to attract visitors. Shemshak can be described as a land with two distinct faces: a

winter landscape of snow, ice, and skiing, and a summer landscape of springs, gardens, and cool mountain air.

During winter, the mountains are covered with snow, and the Shemshak and Darbandsar ski resorts welcome professional athletes and tourists. These slopes are among Iran's best-known ski destinations and offer spectacular views during the snowy season.

With the arrival of spring and summer, however, the snow melts and the springs come alive. During these seasons, village gardens, the sound of streams, and the cool moun-

tain breeze provide a peaceful refuge for those seeking relief from the heat and congestion of the capital.

Shemshak and its surrounding



● IRNA

villages are home to numerous small and large springs emerging from the mountains and flowing toward the valleys. Each spring has its own story, but one of the most famous is the Aftab Nadideh Spring, meaning “the spring that has never seen sunlight.”

According to local accounts, a spring once existed northeast of Shemshak that remained permanently in the shadow of the mountains, receiving no direct sunlight. Residents named it Aftab Nadideh Spring as a reference to this unusual natural feature.

Over the years, natural chang-

es and construction altered the surrounding landscape, allowing sunlight to reach the spring. However, the traditional name has remained unchanged. Visi-

tors still come to see the spring, drink its cold and clear water, and capture photographs of the site.

Shemshak Ski Resort: One of Iran's most famous ski resorts, it attracts visitors in winter for skiing and in warmer seasons for mountain scenery and photography.

Darbandsar Waterfall: Located a few kilometers from Shemshak, this scenic waterfall flows from the mountains into a quiet valley. Reaching it requires some walking, but the natural beauty of the route makes the journey worthwhile.

Imamzadeh Ismail shrine: Lo-

cated in Shemshak, this shrine dates back to the Safavid period. Set in a peaceful green area, it is registered as a national heritage site.

Shemshak and Sefidestan gardens: During summer, these traditional garden alleys, with stone walls and walnut, apple, and red plum trees, create a picturesque landscape.

Culture and people of Shemshak The people of Shemshak are among the long-established inhabitants of the mountainous areas of Shemiranat. Their lives have traditionally been closely connected with nature, from agriculture and livestock farming to tourism and skiing.

Stories of the mining era and harsh winters of the past are still shared by local elders. The residents are known for their hospitality, and visitors who engage with them can often hear memories of snowy days gone by over a cup of warm tea.

In the villages of Shemshak, traditional features such as stone houses, sloped roofs, wood-burning stoves, and the sound of livestock bells can still be found. Despite its proximity to Tehran, the area has preserved much of its traditional character.

Ultimately, just a short distance from the busy streets of Tehran, Shemshak allows visitors to enjoy fresh air and listen to the sounds of nature. Whether for skiing in winter or walking through green gardens in summer, Shemshak remains a memorable mountain escape throughout the year.

Reading Room

Iranica Desk

Ancient Persian literature continues to offer contemporary readers fresh narratives and thought-provoking ideas. The book *Patient as a Winter Seed*, a selection of stories from Al-Faraj ba'da al-Shiddah (Relief After Hardship) by Qazi Abu Ali Mohsen al-Tanukhi, seeks to build a connection between today's readers and one of the valuable works of classical literature.

Mohammad Shams Langeroudi, the compiler of the volume, and Farshid Parsikia, the book's illustrator, discussed the collection, the importance of revisiting classical literature, and the process of illustration in an interview with IRNA.

The book *Patient as a Winter Seed*, translated by Hossein ibn As'ad Dehestani, selected by Shams Langeroudi, and illustrated by Farshid Parsikia, has been published in 286 pages by Vazn-e Donya Publications. It is the fourth title in the publisher's classical literature series, following *Avarde-and ke...* (One Thousand and One Nights as narrated by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi), *The Tale of Abu Fazl: Tarikh-e Beyhaqi* Selected and Introduced by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, and *Nowruznameh* by Hakim Omar Khayyam Neyshabouri with an Introduction by Ali Dehbashi.

In the interview, Langeroudi described Al-Faraj ba'da

al-Shiddah as one of the most engaging and instructive works of classical literature. He said the book is a collection of stories that, in addition to their narrative appeal, provide a picture of the social conditions of their era — a period when violence and crime were sometimes portrayed as ordinary events, with the author presenting them without particular emphasis.

He added that the central theme of the work is hope, as the stories show that relief and salvation can follow hardship. According to Langeroudi, these narratives remind readers that human beings do not have a complete understanding of the path of life and the events that await them.

Explaining his reason for selecting stories from Al-Faraj ba'da al-Shiddah for contemporary readers, the poet said his aim was not simply to return to classical literature by revisiting the past, but rather to take a renewed look at this literary heritage. He stressed that literature and art do not follow a path of evolution; rather, they undergo transformations over time, and transformation does not necessarily mean improvement.

Referring to the changes brought to modern Persian literature by figures such as Sadeq Hedayat and Nima Yushij, Langeroudi said language remains the most important tool of writers and poets, and its roots should be



Mohammad Shams Langeroudi

sought in classical literature. He noted that a precise understanding of words and their subtle differences in meaning can be achieved through studying classical texts, adding that writers should recognize the fine distinctions between words that may appear similar at first glance.

He also rejected the idea that contemporary readers can easily understand all classical texts, saying that works from past periods are highly diverse and that some literary and ornate texts remain difficult even for today's readers. Referring to the differences between works such as *Kalila and Dimna* and *The Tales of Bidpai*, Langeroudi said that even works translated from the same source during a similar historical period can differ greatly in language and level of difficulty.

According to him, both the richness of the Persian language and the historical conditions of society have influenced the way modern readers engage with classical texts. However, the fact that some elements of the

language have remained unchanged does not mean that all works from the past are easy for contemporary readers to understand.

Discussing the relationship between today's audiences and poetry and fiction, Langeroudi said that although some people have a stronger preference for poetry, stories — especially popular fiction — generally attract wider audiences. However, Al-Faraj ba'da al-Shiddah is not a popular work and is more significant for those with a serious interest in literature.

Regarding similarities between the period when Al-Faraj ba'da al-Shiddah was written and the present day, he said that there are parallels between the past and today in issues such as corruption and crime, although the outward appearance and forms of life have changed. In his view, the essence of history has not changed significantly, while mainly its external forms have been transformed.

Farshid Parsikia, the book's illustrator, also explained the process behind creating the artwork, saying that the designs were developed through research into the text and consultation with specialists. He said the process begins with studying the texts and gathering information, followed by identifying key concepts and keywords and transforming them into visual elements. He described illustration



as a process different from painting, explaining that in painting an artist mainly expresses personal ideas and perceptions, while in illustration the artist must understand and visually convey a concept created by the writer or another creator. For this reason, illustrating a book can sometimes take two to three months.

Parsikia added that illustrations were designed specifically for different sections of the book based on the content of each story, ranging from portraits of characters to battle scenes and narrative settings. Typography for certain words and titles was also designed to strengthen the reader's connection with the text.

He emphasized that the il-

lustrations were not created merely to enhance the book's beauty but also to improve the understanding of its concepts. According to Parsikia, Vazn-e Donya Publications seeks to strengthen contemporary readers' — particularly younger generations' — connection with Iran's classical literary heritage through innovative approaches to book design.

Parsikia also explained that the colors chosen for the covers of the series are selected based on the content and atmosphere of each work, giving the collection a distinct visual identity and making the reading experience of classical texts, which can sometimes be challenging and dense, more appealing to audiences.



Iranian students collect 10 medals at global math, economics Olympiads

Social Desk

Iranian students won a combined 10 medals at the 2026 International Mathematical Olympiad and the International Economics Olympiad in China, earning two gold, two silver and six bronze medals, while also receiving the competition's highest finance score, according to Iran's Education Ministry. The latest results showed another strong showing for Iran in two of the world's most prestigious academic contests, with students excelling in advanced mathematics, economics and finance against top competitors

from more than 100 countries. Iranian students also claimed the overall team championship at the 67th International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO 2026), finishing with two gold and one silver and three bronze medals. The IMO 2026 was held from July 10 to 21 in Shanghai. Ali Joonbakhsh claimed and Alireza Sharifi claimed gold, Seyed Amirhossein Tayyeb won silver and Arsha Azizeddin, Radin Nik Eghbali, and Arian Zandi each took bronze. At the 9th International Economics Olympiad, staged in Shenzhen from July 12 to 20 with more than 270 students



representing 54 countries, Mobin Karimi Dizicheh captured a silver medal and posted the highest score in the finance section, earning the event's top finance award.

Mohammadhossein Rahimi-Nejad, Alireza Atashi and Ehsan Zolfaghari each received bronze medals, while Amirreza Nematollahi was awarded an honorary diploma. "This distinction reflects excellence in finance as well as economics," organizers said in announcing Karimi Dizicheh's performance after he recorded the highest mark in the finance competition. The economics team built on last year's success at the 2025 International Economics Olympiad in Azerbaijan, where Iran won two silver and two bronze medals.

The latest achievements extend a series of strong international performances by Iranian students this year. Earlier this month, the country's chemistry and biology teams won eight medals, including three golds, at the International Chemistry Olympiad in Uzbekistan and the International Biology Olympiad in Lithuania. Iran's physics team also secured three gold and two silver medals at the 56th International Physics Olympiad in Colombia, reinforcing the country's sustained presence among the world's leading academic Olympiad contenders.

Direct Tehran-Minsk flights to revive bilateral tourism



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Belarus are moving to revive bilateral tourism by paving the way for direct flights between Tehran and Minsk, officials said at a tourism cooperation meeting in Tehran on Sunday, as both countries push to implement a tourism agreement signed by their presidents during Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Minsk in August 2025. The meeting brought together Belarusian Ambassador to Tehran Dmitry Koltsov, officials from Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the Foreign Ministry, the Iran Chamber of Commerce, lawmakers, tour operators and tourism executives, who stressed the need to translate strong political ties into tangible cooperation in the travel sector. "The Islamic Republic of Iran views tourism as one of the most effective tools of international diplomacy," said Moslem Shojaei, director general of the ministry's Office of International Tourism Marketing and Development. He emphasized that expanding tourism relations with Belarus "should be driven by the private sector," while the government provides the necessary framework for cooperation. Shojaei noted that Belarus has been designated as one of Iran's target tourism markets and that Belarusian citizens have been able to visit Iran without visas since 2023. He also proposed establishing a joint technical tourism committee and invited Belarusian travel companies to participate in an upcoming gathering of international tour operators in Iran. A major breakthrough appears to be within reach after Belarus completed the regulatory steps required for direct air services. "Following Mahan Air's trial flight two years ago, the Civil Aviation Department of Belarus has issued all the necessary permits for direct flights," Ambassador Dmitry Koltsov said. "Iranian airlines can now launch the route." Koltsov said the tourism cooperation agreement signed during President Pezeshkian's visit to Minsk is now entering the implementation stage, with the relevant organizations working to put the required infrastructure in place. "We can expect to witness real growth in tourism between Iran and Belarus," he said. Mostafa Mousavi, head of the Tourism Commission at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, described the absence of direct flights as the biggest obstacle to expanding tourism and broader economic ties. He said stronger tourism exchanges could also stimulate trade, investment and business cooperation, proposing joint working groups on aviation connectivity, travel package development and medical tourism. Koltsov also encouraged Iranian tour operators to attend Belarus' annual international tourism exhibition, saying the event would provide "a good starting point" for expanding cooperation between tourism businesses in the two countries.

SCO film festival hands two acting awards to Iranian cinema

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian cinema emerged among the standout winners at the fourth Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) International Film Festival after the Iran-Tajikistan co-production 'Fish on the Hook' captured the festival's Best Actor award and Iranian actress Shabnam Ghorbani won Best Actress for her performance in 'The Gambler'. The awards were presented at the closing ceremony on July 19 at the Ruh Ordo Cultural Center in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, capping the four-day festival held on the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul from July 16 to 19. The event brought together filmmakers, actors, producers and screenwriters from eight Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states to show-

case films and expand regional cinematic collaboration. The international jury jointly awarded the Best Actor prize to Khurshid Mustafayev and Abdullo Abdurahimzoda, the lead actors of 'Fish on the Hook'. Directed by Muhiuddin Muzaffar, the film is a co-production of Tajikfilm, Tajikistan's Dov Film, and Iran's iFilm and SiKAAP Film, underscoring growing cinematic cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan. Ghorbani received the festival's Best Actress award for her role in the social mystery thriller 'The Gambler'. Unable to attend the ceremony, director Mohsen Bahari accepted the award on her behalf. On stage, Bahari dedicated the Golden Crane award to the memory of the 168 students and teachers killed in Minab.

Produced by the Farabi Cinema Foundation, 'The Gambler' has now won awards at international festivals in North Macedonia and Kyrgyzstan. 'Fish on the Hook' follows a 10-year-old boarding school boy who embarks on a cross-country journey through Tajikistan with a gambler in search of his mother, weaving together themes of hope, human dignity and personal transformation. The film has continued to build momentum on the international festival circuit, winning the top prize at Russia's Zabaikalsky International Film Festival earlier this year after claiming the Grand Prix at Tajikistan's National Cinema Awards in 2024. The festival's Grand Prix, the Golden Crane, went to Kyrgyz director Aktan Arym Kubat for



'Black, Red, Yellow'. Other winners included China's Lan Hongchun for Best Director with 'Dear You', Kazakhstan's Azat Khakimov for Best Screenplay with 'Autumn Breeze', Russia's Sergey Astakhov for Best Cinematography with 'Angels of Ladoga', Belarus' Olga Reshetnikova for Best Editing with 'One for Two', and Kasym Muinzoda for Best Music for 'The Great Amir and Donna Anna'.

Historic Chehel Sotoun columns show structural deformation after blast damage

Arts & Culture Desk

Structural engineers confirmed deformation and buckling in several columns of the UNESCO-listed Chehel Sotoun Palace in Isfahan following extensive post-war assessments, the site's director said, as conservation experts moved ahead with emergency stabilization plans while preparing a long-term restoration program. Mostafa Hadipour, director of the Chehel Sotoun World Heritage Site, said high-precision surveys carried out by consulting engineering firm Emarat-e Khorshid (sun mansion) formally verified that columns surrounding the palace's central reflecting pool had shifted, while structural damage was also identified along the building's southern rear wall, IRNA reported. "The deformation has now been technically confirmed," he said, adding that emergency reports and conservation studies have been submitted to Tehran to support the next phase of restoration. The Safavid-era pavilion, one



of Isfahan's architectural masterpieces, sustained damage after blast waves from attacks on the nearby Safavid Government House compound during the 40-day war. Hadipour said specialists began monitoring the monument immediately after the explosions, documenting progressive cracking and a gradual deviation in the central columns. "Daily photographic monitoring showed that the cracks were advancing and the columns were gradually shifting," he said. Temporary stabilization measures, including protective shoring, crack monitoring, non-destructive testing and three-dimensional documentation, are already underway. Hadipour said the comprehensive reinforcement project will begin once funding is secured,

while engineers continue evaluating whether the affected columns require dismantling or can be strengthened in place using less invasive techniques. Faramarz Parsi, head of the restoration consulting team, said the columns are not in immediate danger of collapse but require detailed structural modeling to safeguard the monument over the long term. He compared the proposed conservation approach to minimally invasive surgery, saying modern engineering techniques would allow restorers to reinforce the structure while preserving its historical authenticity. "We no longer need to dismantle the columns completely. Today's technology allows us to strengthen them with minimal intervention," he said. According to provincial cultural heritage authorities, 28 historic monuments across Isfahan were damaged during the attacks, including sites within the protected buffer zones of Naqsh-e Jahan Square and the UNESCO-listed Chehel Sotoun Palace.

Iran's ground superiority ...

The IRGC confronted them inside the Strait of Hormuz, while the Army engaged them 20 kilometers from Bandar Abbas. They suffered heavy losses in these clashes.

The reason US media are now reporting around 35 deaths and more than 200 wounded is largely these direct confrontations, which resulted in such a high number of casualties. But they have concealed the figures because they know that if the news gets out in the United States, there will be an uproar. Such an operation would also have no impact on the situation in the Strait of Hormuz. Everyone agrees on this. Even JD Vance said a few days ago that the Strait of Hormuz cannot be reopened by force. A bomb can be placed even on a toy drone and used to attack a ship passing through the strait. Commercial vessels would then not dare to pass through it. The strait must be reopened through a political agreement, in calm and peace, not through aggression.

Given the potential for US military casualties in the event of a ground or amphibious operation, what impact could such a scenario have on public support in the United States and on Donald Trump's political legitimacy at home? If Trump were to commit such an act of madness, it could perhaps be described as the final blow to the political future of Trump and anyone who supports him.