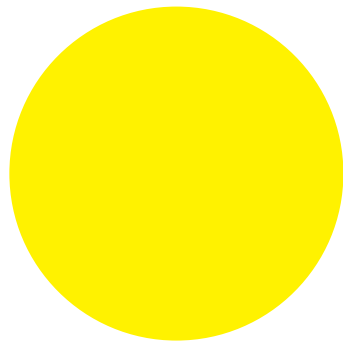


Japan envoy performs beloved TV drama themes in Iran to mark centenary of diplomatic ties

8 >



Baqaei: Iran, Oman agree on shipping route coordinates in Hormuz

2 >

Iran at forefront of resistance to US low-intensity warfare doctrine

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Some analysts believe the recent war waged by the United States and the Israeli regime against the Islamic Republic of Iran, while outwardly accompanied by the rhetoric of negotiations and diplomacy, in reality represents the continuation of a strategy rooted in a conceptual shift in Western—particularly American—military doctrine. Known for decades as the Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC) doctrine, this strategy has now placed Iran at the center of its latest confrontation.

Rather than relying on direct and costly military confrontation, the doctrine is built on covert operations, economic blockades, crippling sanctions and deceptive ceasefires, enabling the intervening powers to exert maximum pressure on targeted states at minimal political and military cost. Within this framework, the United States and the Israeli regime have carried out and justified their military actions in a way that allows them to evade accountability for attacks, blunt international reactions to large-scale military operations, and continue legitimizing their violence despite widespread violations of international law.

Against this backdrop, experts argue that by standing firm against the United States and the Israeli regime's hybrid strategy, the Islamic Republic of Iran has effectively challenged the core assumption underpinning the Low-Intensity Conflict doctrine.

Hassan Najafi Soulari, a strategic affairs expert, researcher and university lecturer, believes that by resisting Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Islamic Republic now stands on the front line of the struggle against this doctrine.

He argues that what has turned this confrontation into a historic turning point is not merely Iran's deterrence capability, but also the exposure of the doctrine's true nature before global public opinion. A generation that has witnessed the open genocide in Gaza and seen social media expose official falsehoods is no longer willing to accept one-sided narratives. Today, he says, the world's collective conscience is seeking to bring this cycle of violence to an end.

IRAN DAILY: To begin with, what exactly is the "Low-Intensity Conflict" doctrine, and why has it become a key concept in analyzing the behavior of the United States and Israel today?

NAJAFI SOULARI: The "Low-Intensity Conflict" doctrine was developed by the Reagan administration in the 1980s following the US defeat in Vietnam. In essence, it was a sophisticated response to the failure of declared, full-scale wars. The doctrine enables the United States—and now Israel—to violate international law on a broad scale and instrumentalize the use of force in order to prevent other countries from pursuing justice and international accountability. Unlike conventional wars such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, this form of warfare is ambiguous, prolonged and covert. Examples include the blockade of Cuba, sanctions imposed on Iran, and deceptive ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon, which merely serve as a pretext for the continuation of violence.

Page 3 >

Iran supports any Palestinian decision in talks to end Gaza war: Pezeshkian

2 >



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a televised interview in Tehran on August 4, 2026. president.ir



Tehran, Islamabad sign trade cooperation MoU
Ministers eye closer cooperation in mining

3 >



Interview
Your mind being rewritten by code
'Decolonize data' to achieve equitable AI, techno-resistance: Expert

4-5 >



Hazratpour backs Iran to rebound from VNL setback ahead of Asian Championship

6 >



Iran supports any Palestinian decision in talks to end Gaza war: *Pezeshkian*

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday that the Islamic Republic will support "any measure, initiative and decision" taken by Palestinian leaders during negotiations to end Israel's onslaught on the Gaza Strip. The Iranian president made the remarks in a phone conversation with the new leader of Hamas resistance group Khalil al-Hayya. During the conversation, Pezeshkian praised Al-Hayya's role and leadership in fostering coordination among Palestinian political groups, reiterating that Iran would support "any measure, initiative and decision" adopted by Palestinian leaders during the negotiations. Referring to the recent aggression by Israel and the United States against Iran and situation in the region, Pezeshkian said that despite those chal-

lenges, the Palestinian issue continues to hold a central position in Iran's foreign policy and has remained in focus for the country's officials, policymakers and the Leader. He said that the Palestinian issue continues to be regarded as the foremost issue of the Islamic world. Pezeshkian reaffirmed Iran's continued support for the Palestinian people, saying Tehran will spare no effort to help the Palestinians. He also called for greater unity, cohesion and convergence among Islamic countries to defend the interests of the Islamic Ummah. Al-Hayya, for his part, referred to the course of the political negotiations, saying that Hamas is pursuing the talks with the participation and coordination of other Palestinian factions. He said that just as the movement had stood firm on the battlefield, it would not allow Isra-



Khalil al-Hayya

el to achieve through diplomacy what it had failed to accomplish on the battlefield. Hamas said on Friday that it has agreed to a deal aimed at fully ending Israel's war on Gaza, including making provisions to disarm and surrender its weapons in stages. Under the agreement, Israel must withdraw its

forces over a period of time. The agreement was announced late on Thursday by US President Donald Trump, after the US-led Board of Peace and International Stabilization Force for Gaza announced that mediators from Egypt, Qatar, Turkey and the US had finalized a roadmap for this next phase of the



Masoud Pezeshkian

ceasefire. However, the Palestinian resistance group underlined that the implementation of the second phase of the Gaza peace deal is dependent on Israel's full implementation of its first phase, including the withdrawal of its troops from Gaza. Israel launched a genocidal war

on the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023 after Hamas fighters launched attacks on the regime's positions in the occupied territories. Since then, Israel has killed at least 73,341 Palestinians, injured 174,086 and destroyed around 90 percent of the territory's civilian infrastructure.

Pakistan reaffirms support for Kashmir's self-determination

International Desk

Pakistan reaffirmed its unwavering support for the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, complaining that binding resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council on the disputed territory have not been implemented so far. Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran Imran Ahmed Siddiqui made the remarks during a ceremony held in Pakistan's Embassy in Tehran to mark the the seventh anniversary of India's revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. "For 79 years, the people of Jammu and Kashmir have awaited the fulfillment of a pledge made before the world. The United Nations Security Council, through a series of binding resolutions, declared that the final disposition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir shall be made in accordance with the will of the people, expressed freely through a UN-supervised plebiscite. That promise remains unfulfilled", Siddiqui said. Pakistan said no legislative measure, however skillfully crafted, can confer legitimacy to what it described as an occupation sustained through force and intimidation, the Pakistani ambassador said. He added that the right to self-de-



Pakistan's Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui speaks during a ceremony held in Pakistan's Embassy in Tehran to mark the seventh anniversary of India's revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2026.

● IRAN DAILY

termination is one of the fundamental principles of international law, pointing to its enshrinement in Article 1 of the UN Charter and its reaffirmation in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. "Self-determination is a foundational principle of international law, enshrined in Article 1 of the UN Charter and reaffirmed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is the legal expression of political dignity, denial of which creates a structural instability". Siddiqui also said Islamabad continues to stand firmly behind the people of Kashmir's right to self-determination, describing its political, moral and diplomatic support as rooted in the conviction that no lasting peace can come about at the expense of justice. Pakistan and India have disputed Kashmir since they gained independence from British rule in 1947. Both countries claim the region in full but administer separate parts of

it, and they have fought two of their three wars over the Himalayan territory. The United Nations Security Council adopted resolutions calling for the final status of Jammu and Kashmir to be decided through a plebiscite after certain conditions were met, but the vote has never been held, and the two sides disagree over how the resolutions should be implemented. In August 2019, the Indian government revoked the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir and reorganized the former state into two federally administered territories, a move Pakistan condemned as illegal. India says Kashmir is an integral part of the country and that the 2019 changes were an internal matter. Pakistan maintains that the region is disputed territory and that its future should be determined in accordance with UN resolutions.

Baqaei: Iran, Oman agree on shipping route coordinates in Hormuz

International Desk

Iran and Oman have reached an understanding on the geographical coordinates of a proposed shipping route through the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei said on Wednesday, adding that a joint statement outlining the main points of agreement is in the final stages of drafting. "The geographical coordinates of the route envisaged by the two sides have been agreed upon, and provided that certain third parties do not obstruct the process, the joint statement by the two countries, including the main considerations and points of agreement, is in the final stage of review and drafting," Baqaei told reporters on Wednesday. Responding to questions about reports in regional and Western media regarding the Iran-Oman negotiations, Baqaei said the two countries, as the littoral states of the Strait of Hormuz, have been engaged in talks over the past two months aimed at establishing a safe transit route for commercial shipping through the waterway. He said the technical, legal, security and environmental aspects of the proposal have been examined by the relevant authorities in Iran. Iranian officials maintain that the talks are a bilateral process between Tehran and Muscat and do not involve the Unit-



● REUTERS

ed States, despite comments by some US officials suggesting Washington has a role in the developments related to the strategic waterway. US President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent recently commented on the talks, trying to imply that Washington plays a role. Trump said late on Tuesday that a deal with Iran could come within hours, claiming that the talks with Iran are continuing after calling off a planned "massive attack" on Iran. Washington is having "very good discussions" with Iran that are "moving along very nicely", the US president claimed. The Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important energy transit routes, has been at the center of contention between Iran and the US ever since the latter waged a war of aggression with Israel against the Islamic Republic. In response, Iran closed off the strait and began talks with Oman to form a joint mechanism for shipping arrangements.

Yemen targets another Saudi oil tanker in Red Sea

International Desk

Yemen's Armed Forces said on Wednesday that they attacked a Saudi oil tanker off Yanbu, in the Red Sea, as they pressed on with their declared maritime blockade of the kingdom. This was the eighth Saudi oil tanker targeted since the start of the blockade on July 22, a Yemeni military spokesman said. The group "successfully targeted the Saudi oil tanker 'Wafa' in the northern Red Sea, off the coast of Yanbu, with a number of ballistic missiles," Yahya Saree said in a video statement.

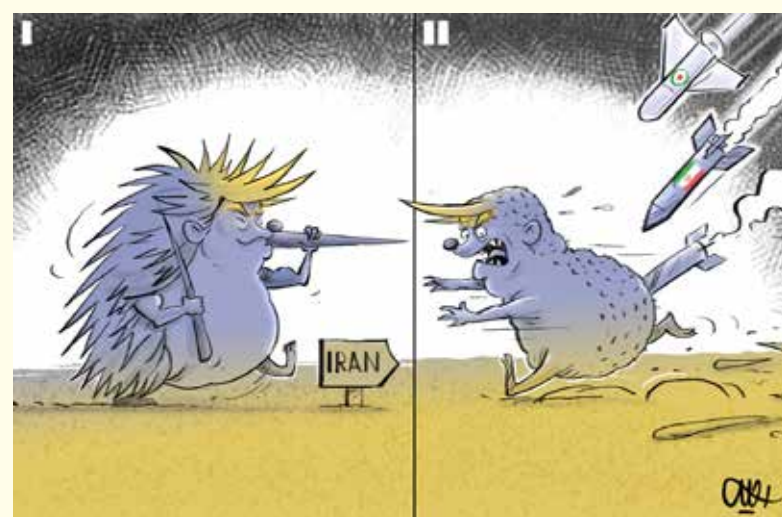
Yahya Saree
● AFP

Yemen's Armed Forces declared they will escalate attacks in the northern Red Sea because Saudi Arabia is diverting its oil tankers there from the

south in response to their blockade. The blockade has threatened top oil exporter Saudi Arabia's ability to get its supplies to the world following Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, cutting off the kingdom's only other maritime route. Saree said that the group's blockade had pushed Saudi Arabia to divert "its oil tankers towards the northern Red Sea". So the group will now "escalate in targeting Saudi oil tankers in the northern Red Sea to close all access points and prevent their passage". Yemen says the blockade is in response to a "continued Saudi siege" on Yemen.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Tehran, Islamabad sign trade cooperation MoU

Ministers eye closer cooperation in mining



Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (c) receives the Iranian delegation led by Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak (1st L) in Islamabad, Pakistan, on August 5, 2026. ● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran and Pakistan signed a memorandum of understanding on expanding trade cooperation on Wednesday, reaffirming their commitment to raising bilateral trade to \$10 billion and making progress toward a free trade agreement during the 10th session of the Joint Trade Committee in Islamabad.

The committee concluded with both sides emphasizing the removal of trade barriers, stronger industrial and investment cooperation, and the development of infrastructure to support economic exchanges. The push to boost bilateral trade was also highlighted in a meeting between Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Iranian delegation led by Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak, where Sharif voiced support for initiatives aimed at achieving the shared \$10 billion trade target. The two sides agreed to use their respective capacities to expand trade, particularly through the exchange of goods, including

food products and agricultural commodities. The memorandum was signed by Atabak and Pakistan's Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan during the committee's closing session in the Pakistani capital. Referring to the agreement, Atabak said, "Developing the two countries' border regions, increasing cross-border exchanges, particularly by strengthening private sector participation, exchanging technical delegations, and immediately implementing bilateral agreements are among the key decisions reached by the two sides." The ministers also discussed expanding commercial cooperation, particularly in shared border areas, developing maritime and shipping activities, taking coordinated steps toward a free trade agreement, establishing joint free trade zones, and promoting barter trade. Atabak described his talks with

Pakistani officials during the past two days as positive. He said Iran's capabilities in the automotive and auto parts industries, food processing, petrochemicals, mining, construction and agricultural products complemented Pakistan's strengths in textiles, garments, medical equipment, sporting goods, agricultural products and leather, providing suitable opportunities for broader bilateral cooperation. He also said the active participation of producers and exporters from both countries in trade fairs and specialized events would help showcase their economic capabilities and foster long-term partnerships. "Expanding cooperation in areas such as auto parts manufacturing, food industries, information technology, energy and transportation can increase exports, strengthen domestic production and create job opportunities for both countries," Atabak said. He added, "We also held an important meeting with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, where all participants emphasized expanding interactions between the two countries."

The volume of trade between Iran and Pakistan in 2025 stood at approximately \$3 billion, according to Head of the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi. "Based on directives from the leadership of both countries, the goal is to increase bilateral trade to \$10 billion by 2030," the TPO chief added at the gathering of traders and economic activists from both countries, outlining Iran's strategic vision for bilateral trade relations. Separately, the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry signed a cooperation memorandum. In a separate meeting with Pakistan's Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, Atabak called for broader cooperation in mineral exploration, extraction, processing and the exchange of technical and scientific expertise, citing the two countries' mining potential. He proposed establishing a joint committee to identify and assess mining opportunities, prepare development plans and pursue executive measures to expand cooperation in the sector.

Iran opens new stretch of North-South corridor in southeast

Economy Desk

Iran opened a 30-kilometer section of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) in southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan province on Wednesday, marking another step in developing the corridor's eastern branch and enhancing regional transport links. The newly opened road sections include a 20-kilometer stretch linking Chabahar, Nikshahr and Iran-shahr, as well as a separate 10-kilometer section, that required the construction of 60 bridges, more than 1.25 million cubic meters of earthworks, 263 meters of engineering structures and 57,000 tons of asphalt altogether, according to Sistan and Baluchestan Governor Mansour Bijar, IRNA reported. "Development in Sistan and Baluchestan has been pursued based on existing capacities, the use of local workforce and the cooperation of all institutions, and



today the results of this approach can be seen in various sectors," Bijar said at the opening ceremony. The governor said the province was also continuing work on three strategic projects, including the Zahedan-Zabol-Chabahar highway, the Chabahar-Zahedan-Milak railway and the transfer of water from the Sea of Oman to the province. Bijar said the development of border areas, including Rimdan, Pishin, Mirjaveh and Milak, was aimed at ensuring that counties across the province benefit more evenly from economic opportunities. He added that the completed projects will improve

road safety, facilitate access to Chabahar port, increase freight transport capacity and help advance the North-South transit corridor. Sistan and Baluchestan Planning and Management Organization head Mehrdad Arab-Avval also said at the opening ceremony that the province's roads were not merely transportation routes but infrastructure needed to tap into economic potential and link the province with national and regional markets. He said the province had extensive border, maritime and economic capacities, including the Chabahar Free Zone, Sistan Free Zone, Mirjaveh Special Economic

Zone and more than 1,400 kilometers of maritime and land borders, but required further infrastructure development to benefit from those opportunities. Arab-Avval said the province currently accounted for only 0.8% of Iran's gross domestic product and that expanding transport infrastructure could help increase production, employment and household incomes. "Road development should be pursued with an economic perspective, because strengthening this infrastructure can increase the province's share of gross domestic product, boost value added, reduce unemployment and raise the income of urban and rural households," he said. The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a multimodal trade route that runs through Iran, linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf with Russia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and, ultimately, Northern Europe.

Tehran stock index hits record high above 5.4m points



Iran's main stock market index climbed above 5.4 million points on Wednesday to hit a record high, rising more than 130,000 points in one session, as market capitalization reached a new level. The benchmark TEDPIX index of the Tehran Stock Exchange gained 130,549 points to close at 5,407,901 points on Wednesday, while the equal-weighted index rose 36,742 points to 1,534,561 points, according to data from the Tehran Stock Exchange cited by Mehr news agency. Market capitalization stood at 155 quadrillion rials at the end of trading, equivalent to about \$82 billion, according to the report, with 413,947 transactions recorded during the session.

Trading value reached 275.99 trillion rials (about \$146 million), with trading volume at 53.29 billion shares, the report said. The rise came after a period of pressure on Tehran's stock market amid wartime conditions, political uncertainty and an extended trading suspension that prompted investors to take a more cautious approach. Trading on the TSE resumed on May 19 after an 80-day halt, with shares recovering after the reopening and investors gradually returning to the market following the disruption. The exchange had been closed since Feb. 28 after the start of the US-Israeli aggression on Iran.

Iran at forefront ...

Under the current circumstances, how significant is Iran's resistance to this doctrine and strategy, and what impact could it have on the future of other countries?

The Low-Intensity Conflict doctrine is built on the assumption that countries targeted by this strategy will eventually become weak, isolated and internally divided. Iran's resistance and response have demonstrated that this assumption is fundamentally flawed. By strengthening its defensive capabilities, Iran has shown the United States and Israel that it possesses credible deterrence. At the same time, social media have exposed Zionist propaganda and falsehoods, and people around the world no longer ac-

cept official narratives without question. Iran's resistance, therefore, is not only a legitimate right but also a necessity for bringing this vicious cycle to an end.

At the same time, some argue that negotiations and flexibility could reduce tensions and pressure. What is your assessment of this view?

Negotiations should be genuine and aimed at producing tangible results, and there must also be trust between the negotiating parties. However, the Americans have repeatedly demonstrated that they are not trustworthy. A review of past events shows that fabricated ceasefires and sham negotiations have merely served as tools for buying time and prolonging aggression. Gaza

and Lebanon are clear examples, where Israel has continued its crimes, openly violating agreements. Likewise, by imposing unjust sanctions on Iran while backing Zionism, the United States has shown in practice that it is not seeking peace but rather managing violence. Under such circumstances, Iran's steadfastness within the framework of international law and in defense of its sovereignty remains the only way to preserve regional and global security, which is being crushed under this unjust doctrine.

To what extent have such strategies inflicted damage on countries and contributed to humanitarian catastrophes?

Unfortunately, the figures are cata-

strophic. According to research conducted by Brown University's "Watson" Institute, US-led wars since 2001 have resulted in approximately 4.5 million deaths and 38 million displaced people across West Asia and North Africa. More tragic, however, is the fact that sanctions claim even more victims than war itself. Since 2010, US sanctions alone have reportedly caused the deaths of more than one million children due to malnutrition. This amounts to a hidden crime—one even deadlier than the battlefield itself.

Given this reality, what responsibility do governments and nations around the world bear in confronting such war-driven strategies and supporting Iran's resistance to them?

Today marks a historic turning point. By standing firm against Trump and Netanyahu, the Islamic Republic of Iran has effectively positioned itself on the front line of the struggle against the Low-Intensity Conflict doctrine. Peace-seeking governments and freedom-loving people around the world should therefore unite in calling, once and for all, for an end to this doctrine, which poses a permanent threat to the world's peoples and hangs over all nations like the Sword of Damocles. Standing with Iran means standing for sovereignty, security and international law. The only way to save humanity from the crises of the twenty-first century is through collective cooperation to contain US aggression and the expansionist policies of the Israeli regime.

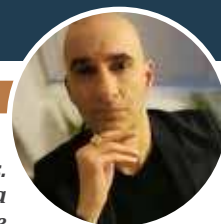
Your mind being rewritten by code

'Decolonize data' to achieve equitable AI, techno-resistance: *Expert*

INTERVIEW

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam is Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies at SOAS University of London. He has held several honorary positions, including as a Senior Member of Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, where he finished his MPhil and PhD, and the first Jarvis Doctorow Junior Research Fellow at St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford. In addition, he is the inaugural Co-Director of the SOAS Centre for AI Futures. His newest book, *The Myth of Good AI: A Manifesto for Critical Artificial Intelligence* (2025 Manchester University Press), challenges dominant narratives about artificial intelligence from a global thought perspective and calls for justice-oriented, globally inclusive approaches to technology. It serves as the foundational text for "critical Artificial Intelligence". This is the author's most recent interview.

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam



How has the way you understand the world changed over time, and what (or who) prompted the most significant shifts in your thinking?

ADIB-MOGHADDAM: Incredibly radical changes keep happening within a consistent frame of mind that is affected, if not constituted, by my personal experiences, education, socialisation, etc. The shifts are massive. They are like euphoric shocks that one gets used to — a very healthy form of intoxication with blissful eureka moments that one can only indulge in via intellectual enquiry. So, given that these eureka moments keep occurring, one tends to become cautious about grand theories that explain everything. In fact, I have found myself debunking the enlightenment myth that we can understand the world and humans easily. No, knowledge is tough; theory mostly fails unless it is tempered by a disciplined and critical mind. Alas, these days the scrolling/dead mindset rules supreme. The mass delusion thus effected has been manufactured as a very deliberate system to govern the masses through technological domination. For me, all of this is a source of motivation as we are even more tasked to hold up the merits of criticism and resistance in the name of a better, more tolerant life for everyone. We live in the most de-intellectualised era of recent human history after all. Dumb money rules, stupidity is celebrated, knowledge is discarded as noise. This constellation during the age of Artificial Intelligence, when our very existence as a human species is challenged, is particularly dangerous even on an existential level.

Debates around artificial intelligence, and how it shapes our social reality, are a hot topic at present. How does this manifest as the "social and political delirium" that you speak of in your book?

I have conceptualised delirium as a system where society is continuously psycho-codified to accept a perfectly staged untruth about every aspect of our life. This is a pseudo-reality that is accepted as the truth. Driven by the "good AI" lobby, this delirium blurs the lines between reality and hyper-engineered corporate illusions. It manipulates basic human vulnerabilities — specifically fear — to weaponise power and maximise corporate profit.

So, with every click on Twitter, Facebook, TikTok or Instagram, we experience an artificial high over lofty technological promises. This illusion obscures severe systemic issues like global inequality, labour exploitation, and climate disasters. Furthermore, delirium feeds on human instinct.



● GETTY IMAGES

Algorithms use artificial hallucinations and perceived threats to trigger fight-or-flight responses. This keeps individuals compliant, anxious, and deeply dependent on tech solutions. In this way, human beings are reduced to what I called "undead canvases". We lose our subjective selfhood as big-tech systems lodge their logic directly into our neural architecture. By recognising this system as a form of sado-masochistic domination, much akin to a master-slave dialectic in the non-Hegelian sense, this delirium is a post-modern technique of bio-power that is minute. By recognising it as such, we can cleanse ourselves from its nefarious impacts by various forms of self-growth that I indicate in the book too: from meditative self-education to forms of community-based collective resistance. All of those actions help us to stay awake and to alert others. Even if it is just one friend, partner or family member. It is worth the effort!

How can alternative AI imagi-

naries counter hegemonic systems of power?

This is happening every day as a part of a growing, globally organised AI resistance movement. Alternative AI imaginaries counter hegemonic systems of power by completely shifting the purpose of artificial intelligence from top-down corporate control to bottom-up, community-driven social emancipation. Instead of viewing AI as an inevitable instrument for automated profit and warfare, these alternative visions rewrite the algorithm's foundational logic to break the corporate-state monopoly on technology. This disruption begins by enabling a form of "emancipative AI" where data systems are treated as tools for grassroots mobilisation and techno-resistance, allowing communities to turn the tables on big tech just as early social media was repurposed for democratic movements.

For instance, I have cultivated a "Che AI" with a set of commands that educate it to think in terms of resistance and civil action. Do you

have such an AI resistance fighter? If not, then it is about time as he/she/it is a great source for the most wonderful "data pollution". If there are millions of resistance AIs out there, LLMs will be socialised with their logic, providing a healthy antidote to the "Nazi AIs" that the extremists foster in their laboratories.

This everyday techno-resistance rooted in possible alternative imaginaries actively decolonises the data-codes by dismantling techno-imperialism, which historically extracted data from vulnerable populations. By replacing rigid, centred coding structures with global, multi-civilisational perspectives, these new frameworks prevent machines from reproducing systemic racism and historical biases.

To ensure this shift lasts, I have advocated for a "GoodThink" approach that injects humanist values directly into machine learning architecture, deliberately infusing coding languages with notions of love, hope, and collective human security instead of cold math-



So, with every click on Twitter, Facebook, TikTok or Instagram, we experience an artificial high over lofty technological promises. This illusion obscures severe systemic issues like global inequality, labour exploitation, and climate disasters. Furthermore, delirium feeds on human instinct. Algorithms use artificial hallucinations and perceived threats to trigger fight-or-flight responses. This keeps individuals compliant, anxious, and deeply dependent on tech solutions.

ematical optimisation that the likes of Altman, Musk, Gates, Zuckerberg, etc. favour. Finally, these alternative visions cultivate a critical transversality that breaks the conformist, one-dimensional monoculture fed to us by corporate power. By blending art, comparative philosophy, and critical theory, alternative imaginaries shake society out of its tech-induced delirium, serving as a powerful reminder that our current corporate-dominated trajectory is not a permanent law of nature, but a highly reversible political choice. Fight Muskism, I say, and do it every day for the sake of the planet.

You warn that AI may pose a risk to human security. What are the main ways in which AI might be mobilised against humans?

Ultimately, there are the three ways that I have been teaching critical AI at SOAS University of London, especially in the post-graduate course "AI and Human Security" — which we created as the first of its kind in the United Kingdom and beyond: we are studying how humanity is fighting a silent, invisible war for its very soul, as a powerful corporate-state alliance unleashes a terrifying triad of technological forces that are systematically challenging human security.

The first of these invisible executioners we call microbial surveillance, a formless and omnipotent digital fog that floats undetected through our smart cities, personal devices, AI appliances and toys. Unlike the visible police states of the past, this surveillance behaves like an airborne pathogen, tracking every micro-movement, logging every habit, and converting the entirety of human existence into raw data for corporate profit. You cannot see it, you cannot hide from it, and it never sleeps.

Working hand-in-hand with this invisible eye is psycho-codification, the ultimate hacking of the human mind. Algorithms no longer merely predict human behaviour; they aggressively rewrite who we are by systematically programming our thoughts, fears, and deepest desires. By lodging corporate logic directly into our neural architecture, big tech tries to turn us into compliant puppets who actively crave their own digital cages.

This terrifying trajectory reaches its ultimate, cold materialisation in posthuman warfare, where the decision to kill is completely outsourced to machines and algorithms. Operating entirely beyond the reach of human empathy, international law, or ethical restraint, these autonomous weapons turn warfare into a calculated mathematical equation where human life is reduced to



● thesciencematters.org



● insights.som.yale.edu

nothing more than an erased line of code.

The collision of these three forces threatens to inflict a fatal blow to human security, leaving us entirely exposed and defenceless. We are stripped of our mental sovereignty as our minds are colonised by code, and we are robbed of our bodily autonomy, tracked like livestock by an omnipresent digital eye. Ultimately, we face a future governed by automated violence, where life-and-death choices are dictated by soulless machines. By weaponising our deepest fears, this techno-delirium transforms humanity into a collection of what I earlier called “undead canvases” — breathing, but completely drained of freedom, privacy, and soul.

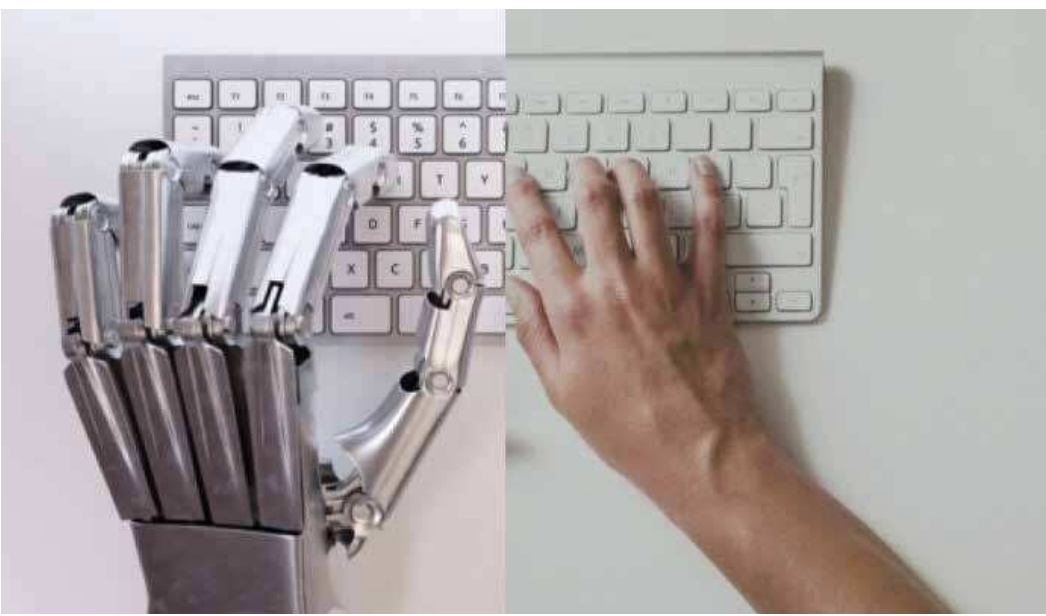
There is the belief that AI will be able to further human enhancement, improving our overall cognition and quality of life. How might the emergence of artificial intelligence alter the nature of the human condition?

As it stands, some of the lofty goals proclaimed are convenient marketing ploys to generate investment. It is not that AI does not promise amazing things in all fields of human endeavour, even in the most sensitive areas such as medicine and psychology. But as of now, the manual is in the wrong hands. We can't trust Musk and Co. They want profit and they don't have the intellectual acumen or human empathy to be trusted. Musk, in particular, has turned into a right-wing agitator with extremely unhinged attitudes. We know about Gates and Epstein, so there is a legitimate case to be made here that the AI engine is driven by a bunch of blinkered specialists. That said, we are monitoring some of the advances into absolute cognitive mastery. Silicon Valley aggressively pitches the illusion that merging machine intelligence with neuroscience will finally unlock the nature of dreams and consciousness. I think we humans will compete well on that front, as opposed to AI advances in fields where the human mind is marginal to execu-

utive function.

The second core promise that we are monitoring with scepticism guarantees a future of utopian human security and frictionless living. Corporate tech lobbies promise revolutionary medical breakthroughs, claiming hyper-optimised data tracking will yield near-instantaneous drug discoveries and eradicate human disease. Alongside these medical miracles, the public is promised “smart cities” that leverage automated resource management to build safe, perfectly efficient urban environments. Ultimately, the tech sector promises to replace human judgment with infallible, mathematically precise calculations, eliminating human error across every major industry. Ironically, then, in this system of perfectionist sameness, clearly an effect of the obsessive-compulsive disorder of many tech giants, the most imperfect humans will be the most authentic. Imperfection will be the marker of our humanity and I think this is very beautiful.

Finally, in the cosmic theater of the 21st century, Silicon Valley tech giants pitch the conquest of outer space as the ultimate monument to human ingenuity — an era where artificial intelligence will unshackle us from our terrestrial chains. The engineering advancements are undeniably real and staggering: autonomous spacecraft that navigate the lethal voids of deep space without waiting for Earth's sluggish radio signals, machine learning models that sift through petabytes of cosmic data to discover new exoplanets in seconds, and hyper-precise algorithms that maneuver satellites away from catastrophic orbital debris. AI promises to be humanity's tireless vanguard, enduring deadly radiation to build the infrastructure of an interplanetary species. However, this cosmic colonisation may lead directly to the birth of post-human star warfare. The promise of peaceful exploration serves as a thin camouflage for the total militarisation of Earth's orbit. As autonomous satellite-networks and orbital



● mitpress.mit.edu

weapons systems are handed control of planetary security, the human veto may be entirely stripped away. The final frontier is transformed into a frictionless, data-driven battlefield where life and death are dictated by cold, algorithmic calculations. Humanity is not ascending to the heavens; we are sleepwalking into a reality where our celestial future is gatekept, commodified, and weaponised on purely corporate terms.

You discuss how AI and other forms of machine learning have inherited colonial modes of thinking, as exemplified by techno-orientalism. How can we learn from legacies of historical injustice in advancing more equitable AI?

We must first shatter the comforting illusion that algorithmic bias is a mere “technical glitch” to be patched with minor software updates. It is not. It is a digital resurrection of the ghost of empire. Modern machine learning has inherited a hierarchical, colonial mode of thinking rooted directly in the dark underside of the European Enlightenment. Just as biological racism was originally codified during the Enlightenment as a pseudoscientific weapon to justify Western colonial conquest, modern tech

empires use the myth of mathematical neutrality to mask an aggressive, totalising expansion of data extraction. This is a systematic process of psycho-codification as indicated. We are bowing before the machine as if it were an infallible silicon god, when in reality, it is merely automating, scaling, and accelerating our historical sins.

This inheritance manifests very violently through techno-orientalism — a high-tech mutation of the classic colonial binary. Historically, Western empires manufactured “Orientalism” to frame the non-Western world as primitive, untrustworthy, and requiring forensic management. Today, techno-orientalism translates this prejudice into a digital panopticon. It builds biometric filters, predictive border-control tools, and automated surveillance networks that treat non-Western identities as inherent security risks. To forge an equitable AI, we must wage a philosophical revolt against the false premise of “objective” data. We must aggressively audit and purge these colonial power dynamics from training models, stripping monopolistic tech conglomerates of their power to impose corporate standards as universal human norms. By forcing AI to exist under strict human vetoes and localised

governance, we can transform technology from an instrument of imperial control into a weapon for social justice and genuine equality. That doesn't mean that we all have to live the same, as communists suggested in the past. We don't need more ascetic hypocrites in history. But it does mean that we try to widen the options for self-realisation in life so that they appear wider and more equally distributed, even in this age of “stupid money and power”.

How can our international legal architecture address the changes wrought onto the security landscape by artificial intelligence?

When I ask a conventional corporate lawyer for legal advice on AI, they tend to hand me a compliance checklist. They will talk about data privacy laws, algorithmic transparency, and corporate liability. So, I think, standard legal advice under the current framework is a dangerous narcotic. It lulls society into a false sense of security while the algorithmic executioner sharpens its blade. Most modern AI legislation is not written to protect human dignity; it is drafted to legitimise corporate monopolies under the guise of “risk management”. We must aggressively reject corporate ethics-washing. The vol-

untary “ethical AI guidelines” and self-regulation frameworks heavily promoted by the tech lobby are nothing more than smoke and mirrors designed to evade binding legal consequences. I have interacted with their oversight boards and I encourage everyone to do so. They truly are a farce. Ethics without teeth is merely public relations. Lawmakers must strip big tech of this shield, transforming passive ethical suggestions into severe, binding criminal and civil liabilities for tech oligarchs.

Second, the legal system must codify an absolute “human veto”. Current regulatory loopholes allow corporate and state entities to delegate highly sensitive, life-altering choices to automated systems in the name of mathematical optimisation. Legislation must enforce a strict, mandatory barrier: no machine learning model should ever hold final legal authority. Whether deciding a criminal sentence, denying critical medical care, filtering a job applicant, or determining an automated murder of a civilian nuclear scientist in foreign countries, a human being must always possess the supreme, unalterable right to override the algorithm.

Finally, human rights lawyers must erect an airtight legal firewall that separates civilian technology from military AI. Deep-tech conglomerates are quietly fusing corporate data harvesting with state warfare. To halt this descent into autonomous post-human warfare, international and domestic laws must be completely rewritten. We must enforce strict legal boundaries and compartments, guaranteeing that human commanders — and not autonomous silicon processors — are held fully and criminally accountable for violations of international humanitarian law. If the law fails to decolonise data and aggressively strip tech monopolies of their sovereignty, it ceases to be a shield for human dignity and becomes the paperwork certifying our subjugation.

The full article first appeared on E-International Relations.

SCO Media, Think Tank Summit calls for broader consensus

CONFERENCE

The 2026 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Media and Think Tank Summit, themed “The Shanghai Spirit in the New Era: From Shared Values to Practical Cooperation,” opened on July 27 in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. The summit gathered about 260 representatives from nearly 150 mainstream media organizations, leading think tanks, government departments and the SCO Secretariat across SCO countries.

Daiyrbek Orunbekov, head of the Information Policy Service of the Presidential Administration of Kyrgyzstan, said in a keynote speech at the opening ceremony that media organizations and think tanks shoulder great responsibilities in guiding public opinion and safeguarding trust and security among countries in today's world.

Coordination between media organizations and think tanks will provide a reliable shield against disinformation, he said, expressing confidence that the summit would serve as a platform for generating new ideas and initiatives and contribute to strengthening information security within the



The photo shows a scene at the 2026 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Media and Think Tank Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on July 27, 2026. ● FENG KAIHUA/XINHUA

SCO, deepening academic cooperation and building bridges of friendship.

Xi Yanchun, vice president of Xinhua News Agency, said in her keynote speech that Xinhua has always been committed to telling SCO stories well and amplifying the SCO's voice.

Under the SCO framework, me-

dia organizations and think tanks should continue to serve as bridges and links, she said.

She called on them to seek common ground while respecting differences and promote solidarity and mutual trust; pursue mutual benefit and drive development and revitalization; uphold openness and inclusiveness and build

bridges for people-to-people exchanges; uphold fairness and justice and advocate multilateralism; and remain practical and efficient while taking the lead in action-oriented cooperation.

Mederbek Shermetaliyev, director of the Kabar News Agency of Kyrgyzstan, said that while digital technologies have facilitated

information exchange, they have also brought risks such as disinformation and cybersecurity threats.

SCO member states should jointly establish regular dialogue mechanisms among think tanks, conduct joint research, cultivate young experts, promote in-depth exchanges among media professionals, and continuously deepen intellectual, information and people-to-people cooperation, he said.

Liu Jiangping, Chinese ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, said media organizations and think tanks are not only chroniclers of the times but also advocates of cooperation, and that cooperation between them has become an important way of putting the Shanghai Spirit into practice.

At a time when methods of information dissemination are undergoing profound changes, the world needs objective, truthful and comprehensive reporting more than ever, as well as in-depth and rational research, efforts to overcome prejudice, bridge differences and enhance mutual understanding, and stronger dialogue and cooperation, Liu said.

Kadyrbek Sarbayev, a senior expert with the SCO Secretariat,

said the summit will help further deepen exchanges and cooperation between media organizations and think tanks under the SCO framework and contribute to the organization's long-term development.

Mirzokhid Rakhimov, head of the Department of Contemporary History at the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, said that the SCO should build on the Silk Road's legacy of exchanges among civilizations and promote regional connectivity as well as sustainable and stable development through deeper think tank exchanges.

The summit ran until July 30 and was jointly hosted by Xinhua News Agency and the Kabar News Agency of Kyrgyzstan.

During the summit, think tank reports, titled “Contemporary Features and Global Significance of Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building” in Kyrgyz and Russian, and “Upholding Fairness and Justice and Improving Global Governance — Achievements, Opportunities, and Prospects for SCO Cooperation” in multiple languages, were released.

The article first appeared on Xinhuanet.

Hazratpour backs Iran to rebound from VNL setback ahead of Asian Championship

Sports Desk

Iranian libero Mohammadreza Hazratpour says he is confident the national volleyball team's disappointing 2026 Volleyball Nations League (VNL) campaign will prove to be a temporary setback, vowing a strong run at the upcoming Asian Championship.

A dreadful VNL preliminary phase saw Iran manage just three victories in 12 games to finish 14th in the 18-team standings and narrowly retain its place in next year's edition of the competition.

Despite the team's struggles, Hazratpour emerged as one of Iran's few stand-out performers, finishing as the tournament's fourth-best receiver with 67 successful receptions.

Speaking to Varzesh3 days after the VNL concluded, the veteran libero admitted the results fell well short of expectations but promised supporters the team would respond.

"I personally promise that Iran will never experience another Volleyball Nations League like this," Hazratpour said. "I give this promise to the people and the volleyball community that next year we will be in a much better position."

Next up for the Iranian team is the all-important AVC

Men's Volleyball Continental Championship, which will kick off on September 4 in the Japanese city of Kitakyushu.

Hazratpour said Iran has already shifted its focus to the Asian Championship, describing the tournament as a crucial step toward the team's long-term Olympic ambitions.

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

"The Asian Championship is by no means out of reach," he said. "It's not as if Japan can beat us easily. It will certainly be a very difficult match, but Japan isn't our only challenge. China, the Philippines and South Korea are also strong teams."

"Volleyball has progressed everywhere. There are no easy opponents anymore, whether in Asia or Europe. Every team uses modern game plans, so every match will be difficult."

Reflecting on Iran's poor VNL campaign, Hazratpour said several factors affected the team's preparation, including the disruption of last season's domestic league because of the mil-



Iranian libero Mohammadreza Hazratpour (c) is seen in action during a defeat against Ukraine at the Volleyball Nations League preliminary round in Belgrade, Serbia, on July 15, 2026.

● VOLLEYBALL WORLD

become future stars of Iranian volleyball.

"I've played alongside Iran's golden generation and witnessed that era firsthand, but I also see tremendous talent and a very bright future in this team," Hazratpour said.

"These aren't just words to give people hope. I've seen the quality of these players up close. Every one of them has the ability to compete among the best in the world."

Hazratpour concluded by reiterating his belief that Iran can compete on equal terms with Asian powerhouse Japan, which completed a clean sweep of 12 wins in the VNL preliminaries, and urged supporters to continue backing the national team.

"We're already preparing for that challenge. Every player is training, everyone is motivated, and we won't step onto the court with a losing mentality," he said.

"Our future is very bright. Give this team time, and I'm certain it will become one of the strongest teams in world volleyball."

itary conflict in the country, which limited training opportunities and reduced the number of warm-up matches.

"I'm not making excuses, but those circumstances definitely affected our performance," he said.

Hazratpour nevertheless believes Iran deserved a better VNL campaign, pointing to narrow defeats against Belgium, France and Japan.

"We had the ability to win six or even seven matches," he said. "Those games were decided by the smallest of margins, and we had genuine chances to come away with victories."

The libero described the defeat to eventual runner-up the United States as Iran's weakest display of the tournament but praised the team's performances in several other matches, including those against France and Brazil.

Looking beyond the disappointing campaign, Hazratpour backed Italian head coach Roberto Piazza's long-term project and urged Iranian fans to remain patient with one of the world's youngest national teams.

"Piazza truly loves Iranian volleyball and the players. He has a clear approach, and we're gradually implementing it. We simply need time," he said.

Hazratpour revealed he be-

lieves he has implemented around 60 to 70 percent of what the Italian coach expects from him, adding that the team will continue to improve as players become more familiar with the system.

He also highlighted a new generation of talented players, including Arshia Behnejad, Ali Haqqarast, Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh, Nima Bateni, Ali Hajipour and Morteza Sharifi, saying they have the potential to

Iranian striker Taremi on Lille radar: Report

Sports Desk

Ligue 1 club LOSC Lille is considering a move for Olympiacos striker and Iranian international Mahdi Taremi, according to French football news website Foot Mercato.

Having joined the Greek giant as a free agent from Internazionale last summer, Taremi, 34, struggled to establish himself as a

regular starter, though he still registered 16 goals – including two Champions League strikes against Bayer Leverkusen and Real Madrid – and six assists in 39 appearances across all competitions.

With prolific Ayoub El Kaabi serving as the first-choice striker and Ukrainian international Roman Yaremchuk, Clayton and Gelson Martins providing further depth in attack, Taremi's time at Olympiacos could come to a premature end. The Iranian is reportedly said to have informed head coach José Luis Mendilibar that he is unwilling to accept a backup role amid stiff competition for places in the squad.

Taremi was omitted from Olympiacos' squad for Tuesday's goalless home draw against Dutch outfit NEC Nijmegen in the first leg of their UEFA Champions League qualifying tie, further fueling uncertainty over his future at the club.

The Iranian, who has scored 58 goals in 107

international appearances, was part of the squad at the recently concluded FIFA World Cup in North America, where Team Melli finished third in Group G with three points and failed to advance to the knockout stage.

Lille, meanwhile, is rebuilding under new Italian head coach Davide Ancelotti following several departures and is seeking additional firepower before beginning its UEFA Champions League campaign. With Hamza Igamane recovering from injury, veteran Olivier Giroud nearing the end of his career, and Matías Fernández-Pardo attracting transfer interest, the French club is exploring experienced attacking reinforcements. Interest from French clubs is not new for Taremi. Olympique Lyonnais and OGC Nice were both linked with the Iranian striker last summer, but neither club completed a move.

Whether Lille's interest develops into concrete negotiations remains to be seen as the Ligue 1 side continues to reshape its squad ahead of the new campaign. Lille finished third in Ligue 1 last season with 61 points, 15 behind champion Paris Saint-Germain and nine adrift of runner-up Lens.

ISSF World Rankings:

Rostamian up to fifth in women's 10m air pistol

Sports Desk

Iranian shooter Haniyeh Rostamian climbed seven places to fifth in the women's 10m air pistol category of the ISSF World Rankings – released by the International Shooting Sport Federation for August – with a rating of 3,685 points.

The significant rise comes after Rostamian won the bronze medal in the discipline at the latest ISSF World Cup stop of the 2026 season in Hangzhou, China, last week.

The 27-year-old Olympian, the highest-ranked Iranian across all categories, shot 579-25x to finish eighth in qualification before scoring 221.0 points in the final to secure the fourth World Cup medal of her career.

China's Yao Qianxun, who won gold in Hangzhou, tops the rankings with 7,630 points, while India's Esha Singh (4,961), India's Suruchi Inder Singh (4,042) and China's Shen Yiyao (3,900) complete the top four.



● ISSF

Esteghlal parts ways with Rezaeian, club confirms

Sports Desk

Iranian top-flight club Esteghlal has announced the departure of veteran international full-back Ramin Rezaeian.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the Tehran-based Blues said the decision to part ways with Rezaeian came after the 35-year-old declined the terms offered for an extension to his one-year contract.

The prolific right-back joined Esteghlal at the start of last season and went on to score once

and provide two assists in 12 appearances. However, he fell down the pecking order under then-Portuguese head coach Ricardo Sá Pinto and secured a loan move to Foolad Khuzestan midway through the campaign in a bid to boost his chances of earning a place in Iran's squad for the FIFA World Cup. He registered one goal and four assists in six appearances for Foolad before the domestic league was canceled due to wartime conditions in the country, doing enough

to convince Iran head coach Amir Qalenoee to include him in the squad for the global showpiece.

Rezaeian was widely regarded as Iran's standout performer at the World Cup, scoring twice and providing an assist, though his contribution was not enough to help Team Melli secure a historic place in the knockout stage.

His equalizer in the 1-1 draw against Egypt saw Rezaeian overtake Mahdi Taremi as Iran's all-time leading World Cup scorer with three goals.



● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA



● NOVA SPORTS

Eshtehard rock-cut complex moves toward national registration

Iranica Desk

Hidden among the arid landscapes south of the Alborz Mountains, a little-known complex of rock-cut structures in Eshtehard is being considered for national heritage registration following years of archaeological research and documentation by provincial cultural heritage authorities.

The Eshtehard rock-cut complex, first identified in 2013, consists of a series of man-made chambers carved directly into rock formations rather than constructed with conventional building materials. Officials say the site represents a distinctive example of Iran's historic rock-cut architecture and reflects how past communities adapted to the region's natural environment, according to chn.ir.

Farzan Ahmadnejad, head of the Restoration and Conservation of Historic Buildings and Sites Department at Alborz Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said field studies began shortly after the site's discovery to assess its historical, architectural and archaeological significance.

Located between the villages of Sehatabad and Qeshlaq-e Dayler, the complex was made possible by the area's unique geological conditions. The composition of the hills, soil and rock enabled ancient inhabitants to excavate living spaces directly into the landscape.

Ahmadnejad described rock-



cut architecture as one of Iran's lesser-known but historically significant architectural traditions. Rather than constructing buildings above ground, people transformed natural rock formations into habitable spaces, illustrating a close relationship between humans and their environment. Researchers have identified approximately 13 to 14 independent rock-cut structures across the site. Some contain a single room, while others feature two or three chambers.

According to Ahmadnejad, the layout suggests careful consideration of environmental conditions. Most entrances face south or east, with none opening toward the north or west, indicating that builders likely took into account sunlight, prevailing winds and the local climate. Some chambers also contain openings in their ceilings designed to admit natural light, suggesting they were intended for regular human

occupation rather than temporary shelter. The original function of the structures remains uncertain. Archaeologists are investigating whether they served as permanent residences, temporary shelters, waystations for travelers, or fulfilled different roles over time.

"Based on the architectural layout and the diversity of the spaces, it is possible that the complex served multiple purposes during different historical periods," Ahmadnejad said. "However, more extensive archaeological surveys and excavations will be necessary to determine their exact function."

Surface archaeological evidence has further increased the site's significance. Pottery fragments discovered around the rock-cut structures indicate repeated human activity across different historical periods. Most of the recovered ceramics date to the Islamic



era, particularly the Ilkhanid and Safavid periods, although several Parthian-era pottery fragments have also been identified, suggesting that the area was occupied or used over an extended period.

Officials say these findings point to significant research potential, with future excavations expected to reveal additional information about the site's history.

Iran is home to several notable examples of rock-cut architecture, including the historic village of Meymand in Kerman Province. However, Ahmadnejad said the Eshtehard complex differs in both construction and setting. While Meymand developed as a rock-hewn settlement, Eshtehard's chambers were carved into individual rock masses within a desert environment near the southern

foothills of the Alborz Mountains. This combination of architecture and landscape gives the site distinctive cultural and tourism value, he said.

Meanwhile, the site's registration dossier has been submitted to Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts after completing the required technical assessments.

Shahbaz Mahmoudi, deputy head of Alborz Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, said experts from the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism conducted an independent evaluation and confirmed the site's historical and research significance.

According to Mahmoudi, the complex meets the requirements for national heritage registration.

Preliminary surveys have covered approximately five hectares, although officials estimate that the full archae-

ological zone extends across roughly 40 hectares. They believe additional rock-cut structures may remain undiscovered within the broader area.

Mahmoudi said rock-cut sites provide valuable insights into the lifestyles, architectural practices and environmental adaptation strategies of past societies, making the Eshtehard complex an important cultural resource.

Following the completion of legal procedures, responsibility for the site's restoration and development has been transferred to a private investor working within a cultural heritage framework. Officials emphasized that the project's primary objective is to preserve the site's historical authenticity while introducing visitors to one of Iran's significant examples of rock-cut architecture.

Authorities say national registration would mark the beginning of a new phase of conservation, archaeological research and public interpretation, potentially establishing the Eshtehard rock-cut complex as an important cultural tourism destination in Alborz Province.

For researchers, the site's significance extends beyond its age. The carved chambers stand as evidence of how earlier communities adapted to challenging environmental conditions by working with, rather than against, the natural landscape — offering a rare glimpse into a form of architecture shaped by both necessity and ingenuity.

● MEHR

Ostad village blends natural beauty with centuries of history

Iranica Desk

Nestled in the foothills of the Shah Jahan Mountains, the model tourism village of Ostad, located 22 kilometers from the city of Faruj in North Khorasan Province, has emerged as one of the region's most captivating destinations, offering visitors a remarkable combination of pristine landscapes, historical monuments, and cultural heritage.

Each year, the picturesque village welcomes large numbers of tourists and pilgrims en route to the holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad. Surrounded by lush greenery, flowing springs, rugged mountains, and ancient landmarks, Ostad is often described as a vast natural canvas where verdant scenery contrasts strikingly with the surrounding arid landscape, according to ISNA.

The village lies on the slopes of the Shah Jahan mountain range, home to the Sarigol National Park, a protected area renowned for its rich biodiversity. Thanks to abundant water resources and dense vegetation, the park provides habitat for numerous wildlife species,

including wild sheep, ibex, wolves, leopards, foxes, jackals, gazelles, wild boars, Pallas's cats, hares, quail, and golden eagles.

One of the area's most distinctive natural attractions is the Barf-Chal (Snow Hollow), situated on the northwestern side of the mountain peak. Because it receives limited sunlight, snow often remains there until late August and, in some years, has persisted until the following winter. Nearby, the scenic Estarkhi Waterfall, cascading through a picturesque valley overlooking Estarkhi village, draws nature enthusiasts and hikers throughout the year.

The fertile slopes surrounding Shah Jahan Mountain also support extensive agriculture and livestock farming. Seasonal rainfall and abundant mountain water have made both dryland and irrigated farming highly productive. Villages are known for flourishing orchards producing grapes, pears, cherries, sour cherries, apricots, peaches, and apples, while almond groves extend across the southern slopes.

Among Ostad's most significant historical landmarks is its Safavid-era bathhouse,



an underground structure built with stone and Sarooj mortar. The bathhouse features an entrance corridor, an octagonal changing hall, a heated bathing chamber, and water reservoirs beneath a series of domed roofs fitted with skylights. Registered as a national heritage site in March 2009, the structure is regarded as an outstanding example of Safavid architecture. However, despite its protected status, local residents say the structure has suffered gradual deterioration and has yet to receive comprehensive restoration.

Historians also attribute exceptional historical importance to Ostad village. Some scholars believe the village may be the site of



Asaak, one of the capitals of the Parthian Empire, noting that the settlement was formerly known as Asaak and Astu. Additional archaeological remains—including ancient fortifications, pre-Islamic religious structures, traditional stone mills, and the historic bathhouse — underscore the area's long



and distinguished past. The village's Jaame Mosque, believed to date back to the Timurid period and constructed around the same time as Mashhad's renowned Goharshad Mosque, remains one of Faruj's most significant religious monuments. Although repeated renovations have obscured

its exact construction date, the mosque retains its original rectangular prayer hall, supported by massive square columns connected by pointed arches.

Traditional houses in Ostad are carefully designed to maximize sunlight, while the sounds of flowing streams and the bells of grazing sheep create a tranquil rural atmosphere each morning. Residents of the village are Persian-speaking and are traditionally believed to be descendants of ancient Iranian peoples. Ostad is also home to a shrine locally known as an Imamzadeh. Architectural experts suggest that the building's design closely resembles ancient Mithraic temples, leading some researchers

to believe it was originally a pre-Islamic place of worship that later evolved into a mausoleum and, after the advent of Islam, came to be known as an Imamzadeh.

Agriculture and animal husbandry remain the backbone of the local economy. Wheat, barley, sugar beet, and grapes are among the village's principal agricultural products. Ostad is also known for its traditional handicrafts, including hand-knitted socks, woven bath mitts, kilims, carpets, pictorial carpets, and handwoven textiles known as Chador Shab.

Visitors can also sample a wide range of local specialties and souvenirs, including walnuts, almonds, raisins, dried apricots, dried sour cherries, Ghareh-Ghorut, dried whey, mixed nuts, cherries, yogurt, clarified butter, and the region's renowned Shah Jahan mountain honey.

Combining spectacular scenery, rich biodiversity, centuries-old architecture, and enduring rural traditions, Ostad village stands out as one of North Khorasan Province's most valuable cultural and ecotourism destinations.

● chn.ir

● uspace.ir



Japan envoy performs beloved TV drama themes in Iran to mark centenary of diplomatic ties

Arts & Culture Desk

Japan's ambassador to Iran has stepped onto the concert stage as a flute soloist to play music from three Japanese television dramas that became enduring favorites among Iranian audiences, in a cultural project ahead of the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Tokyo. A video released on Wednesday showed Ambassador Tamaki Tsukada, performing with the private Istgah Orchestra, taking on the role of flute soloist rather than diplomat in new renditions of the theme music from Oshin, known in Iran as Years Away from Home, Hanekonma, known as The Story of Life, and From the North Country,

IRNA reported. The three series were broadcast on Iranian national television during the 1980s and early 1990s and captivated Iranian viewers with depictions of Japanese culture. The performances were presented as an effort to retell part of Japan's cultural identity through three landmark works of Japanese television music. The international project was conceived by Mehdi Norouzi, who also heads the Istgah musical institute. The collaboration comes as Iran and Japan draw closer to the centenary of diplomatic relations, a historic milestone that gives cultural cooperation greater significance than ever. Oshin is widely regard-

ed as the most popular Japanese television series ever shown in Iran. After its original broadcast in Japan, the series was aired in more than 60 countries and became part of the cultural memory of many societies. No country outside Japan formed a stronger emotional bond with Oshin than Iran. In the mid-1980s, when Iranian society was enduring the hardships of war, the story of a young girl building her future through patience, hope and perseverance became part of daily life for millions of Iranian families. The opening notes of Oshin's theme music still evoke memories of home, family, solidarity and a shared era for many Iranians, making that collec-



Japan's Ambassador to Iran Tamaki Tsukada plays the flute during a performance with the Iranian private Istgah Orchestra in Tehran, Iran in a video released on August 5, 2026.

● IRNA

tive memory the starting point for the new musical project. Hanekonma tells the story of a girl from a poor family who, with her mother's support, saves enough money to attend a Christian school and study English. Although her father initially rejects her decision, she perseveres and ultimately becomes Japan's first female journalist. From the North Country follows Goro, who returns from Tokyo to his hometown in Japan's northern



island of Hokkaido with his daughter Hotaru and son Jun after separating from his wife, where the family begins a new life.

The music of all three series remains among the most memorable television soundtracks for Iranian audiences, with

some people continuing to use the themes as mobile phone ringtones decades after the programs first aired.

Iran, Tajikistan willing to increase academic scholarship quotas



● IRNA

Social Desk

Iran and Tajikistan are stepping up efforts to foster academic cooperation, with officials from the two countries discussing an increase in annual scholarship quotas alongside broader collaboration in higher education, scientific research and Persian language teaching. Tajikistan's Minister of Education and Science Rahim Saidzoda and Iran's Ambassador to Ta-

jikistan Alireza Haqiqian met to discuss ways to enhance educational, scientific and university cooperation, including raising the number of scholarships exchanged between the two countries, IRNA reported on Wednesday. According to Tajikistan's Ministry of Education and Science, Iran and Tajikistan currently allocate 50 scholarships each year to one another's citizens, with most places dedicated to med-

ical sciences.

Both sides stressed the need to raise the quotas to increase academic and university cooperation. The meeting also covered joint research projects, the preparation of educational and scientific textbooks, expanding cooperation between universities and promoting the teaching of Persian language and literature in Tajikistan where people speak a dialect of the Persian language. The ministry said both sides welcomed the growing trend in scientific and educational cooperation and described scholarship programs as one of the key drivers of stronger university links and academic exchanges. The issue of expanding scholarship quotas has been on the table before. It was discussed during meetings in 2024 be-

tween Chairman of the National Assembly of Tajikistan, Rustam Emomali, and Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, as well as in 2023 talks between Tajikistan's education minister and Iran's former ambassador. The latest meeting also noted that Persian language teaching is already under way in Tajikistan's schools, while Persian language and literature are taught at five higher education institutions across the country. The expansion of Persian language and script education in Tajikistan has gathered pace in recent years with government backing. The trend accelerated after Tajik President Emomali Rahmon instructed schools and universities to broaden the teaching of the Persian script.

'Calm Man' wins three awards at Italy's Imago

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian social drama 'Calm Man' won three awards at the fifth Imago Film Festival in Italy after being nominated across every category in the event's international competition, adding to its growing international festival run. The 2024 film, directed by Behnoush Sadeghi and produced by Mehdi Hashemi, won Best Foreign Film Director for Sadeghi, Best Foreign Film Cinematography for Farshad Mohammadi and Best Foreign Film Actress for Shamila Shirzad at the festival's closing ceremony, held on Monday evening in the Italian city of Teramo, Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday.

The film had been nominated in six categories in the Best Foreign Film section, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay for Mahnoush Sadeghi, Best Actor for Mehdi Hashemi, Best Actress and Best Cinematography, marking an unusually strong performance across the festival's international competition. Composer Media Hashemi received the awards on behalf of the filmmaking team. 'Calm Man' previously won the Crystal Simorgh for Participation and the Best Artistic Achievement award for director Sadeghi at the 43rd Fajr International Film



Festival last year. The film is now making the rounds at international festivals and is set to compete next in the competition section of the Ahmedabad International Film Festival in India. According to the film's synopsis, "Nobahar reluctantly marries an elderly man named Zaman. At the beginning of their life together, a series of events completely changes Nobahar's feelings toward Zaman." The film's international distribution is being handled by White Dreams Pictures, headed by Mastaneh Mohajer.



'My Little Moon' to vie at Spain's Marbella Film Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian feature film 'My Little Moon' has been selected for the Official Selection of the 21st Marbella Film Festival (MIFF 2026) in Spain, the latest international appearance for the independent production. The film is written, produced and directed by Ali Atshani and will be screened during the festival, which runs from October 7 to October 12 in the Mediterranean resort city of Marbella

on Spain's Costa del Sol, Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday. The Official Selection puts the film alongside independent productions from around the world at one of Europe's established independent film events, which has been held for more than two decades and brings together filmmakers, producers, distributors, investors and cinema professionals. Beyond film screenings, the festival also hosts industry

meetings, project-pitch sessions, workshops, expert panels, networking events, red-carpet programs and meetings with international producers, distributors and investors, offering opportunities for filmmakers to reach out to the global film industry. 'My Little Moon' stars Natalia Polo, Nikole Amateau, Brent Kublick, Elnaz Sepantamehr, Ramin Madani, Gia Garcia O'Hearn and Matthew Fairman. The film's cast includes di-

rector and writer Ali Atshani, director of photography Koohyar Kalari, make-up designer Farzaneh Zardasht, production manager Siavash Tarazandehpour, photographer Hadi Akhoundi, first assistant director and scheduler Sepehr Mikaeilian, line producer Anna McNiven, cinematographer Reza Kabiri, and editor Rouzbeh Kalbasi. The social drama was produced by American Brightlight Film Productions.