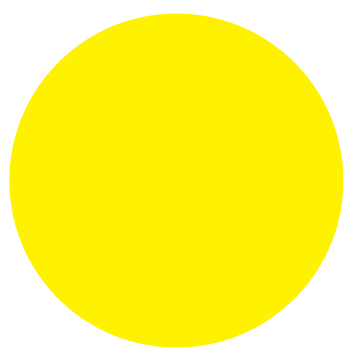


Iran, Russia plan joint investment in films, animation, video games

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The screengrab shows Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) sitting for an interview with CBS in New York, US.

US sanctions on Iran's aviation sector go far beyond air links

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

The United States has recently imposed sanctions on Iran's aviation sector with the stated objective of completely severing Iran's access to international aviation services. In an interview with Iran Daily, international affairs analyst Abed Akbari argued that the geopolitical significance of these sanctions extends far beyond Iran's aviation industry and should be understood as part of a broader contest over the limits of American power and the independence of state decision-making within the international system.

IRAN DAILY: What is the primary objective behind Washington's decision? Is this move a prelude to heightened military pressure, or merely a tool to gain leverage in negotiations?

AKBARI: The purpose should not be viewed solely through an economic or technical lens. What is currently taking shape is part of a broader Washington strategy to transform its financial power and the global position of the dollar into instruments for imposing its will on third parties. The United States is seeking to force not only Iranian companies, but also airports, ground service providers, fuel suppliers, ticketing firms, and even financial networks in other countries into a binary choice: cooperate with Iran or face US sanctions. From an international relations perspective, this approach can be understood as a form of "extra-territorialization of sanction power." The key issue is that Washington is attempting to make the independent decisions of foreign governments and companies subject to its sanctions regime, even though many of these sanctions are imposed not through the United Nations Security Council but through domestic US legislation. The central criticism, therefore, is not limited to sanctions on Iran itself; it also concerns America's claim to determine the boundaries of other countries' economic relations.

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Tehran ready for talks with Washington but rejects 'bullying': *Pezeshkian*



The screenshot shows Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during an interview with US broadcaster CBS on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran is ready to engage in talks with the United States over its nuclear program and monitoring mechanisms, stressing that Iran will not accept pressure or be forced into submission. Pezeshkian made the remarks in an interview with US broadcaster CBS on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in

New York.

"We will negotiate with all our heart, but we do not accept bullying and coercion, and we will not accept being forced into submission," the Iranian president said.

He said Iran's experience with previous agreements has created a deep level of mistrust toward the United States due to its refusal to honor its commitments. The president cited the 2015 nuclear agreement, saying the US withdrawal

from the deal in 2018 contributed to the current lack of trust.

"We are committed to what we undertake," Pezeshkian said. "What caused the path of understanding to be cut off was the other side's failure to honor the agreement."

Referring to previous negotiations, he said Iran and the US reached an understanding in Islamabad in July, and Tehran was prepared to return to the same framework if Washington agreed to resume the previous process. President Pezeshkian also linked the current tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz to the breakdown of the understandings between the two sides, saying the US blocked Iran's routes and Tehran responded in kind. "It is the United States that has now blocked our way. Naturally, we have also blocked the way," he said.

No trust in US

He also referred to subsequent military attacks during periods of negotiations,

saying, "You put yourselves in our position. If someone comes and kills your leader and then does not honor the agreement you reached, what would your reaction be?"

The US and the Israeli regime launched an unprovoked war on Iran on February 28.

During the aggression, the US and the Israeli regime assassinated Iran's Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, along with senior military commanders, while thousands of civilians, including women and children, were also killed.

Iran responded with a series of retaliatory operations targeting US military assets and bases across the region.

The escalation ultimately forced the US and the Israeli regime to agree to a ceasefire on April 8 after Iran's retaliatory operations inflicted significant costs on the aggressors.

The Islamabad MoU was aimed at ending the war, but Washington soon violated the agreement by failing to re-

spect Iran's arrangements concerning the Strait of Hormuz.

The strategically vital waterway was largely closed during the war on Iran, severely disrupting regional maritime traffic and placing further pressure on energy shipments.

Iran's new proposal

The Strait remains closed, and Iran has made clear that it will not allow its reopening until the United States meets the demands Tehran has announced. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Friday outlined a seven-day plan for reopening the Strait of Hormuz, saying implementation would begin immediately if the United States accepted Iran's conditions. He said the seven-day period would begin once Washington accepted the plan.

The US had yet to publicly respond on Saturday after Iran offered the plan, though reports indicated that President Donald Trump had rejected the proposal.

FM says devastating impact of sanctions on Iranians constitutes 'economic terrorism'

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the US sanctions imposed on Iran are directly affecting the daily lives of the Iranian people, which their devastating impact constitutes "economic terrorism".

Addressing a high-level meeting of the Global Development Initiative on the sidelines of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Friday, Araghchi noted that development cannot thrive in an environment shaped by war, coercion, and unilateralism.

"Developing countries need financial resources, technology, knowledge and cooperation, not more barriers," he said.

He censured the continued use of unilateral coercive measures as a tool of political pressure against developing countries.

"Iran has faced such measures for decades, and they have intensified over recent years and months,"



Abbas Araghchi
IRNA

he said, adding that US sanctions restricting trade, financial resources, medicine, technology, education and scientific cooperation directly affect the daily lives of the Iranian people. "From our perspective, the devastating impact of these measures on ordinary people constitutes economic terrorism," Araghchi said. "The United Nations must stand against such coercive measures and call for their complete and unconditional lifting." Iran's top diplomat also said sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace and respect

for international law, stressing the need to place development at the center of international cooperation.

Araghchi said the need to put development at the heart of international cooperation has never been more urgent.

"Developing countries continue to face persistent poverty and hunger, widening inequalities, rising debt burdens, gaps in financing and technology, and growing environmental challenges," he said.

"These pressures have been further intensified by conflicts, protectionist

policies, unilateral coercive measures, acts of aggression and the use of force, undermining development prospects and reversing hard-won development gains," the Iranian foreign minister added.

Araghchi also condemned the ongoing US-Israeli aggression against Iran as "a clear violation of international law and the UN Charter".

He said the attacks have killed thousands, including women and children, and destroyed civilian and vital infrastructure, causing severe economic, social and environmental damage.

Referring to several sites hit during the attacks, including a primary school in the southern city of Minab where 168 students were killed, Iran's Pasteur Institute and a sports complex in Lamerd, in Fars province, Araghchi said places representing "education, health and hope" have been turned into scenes of "blood, death and destruction."

Gharibabadi: Int'l law's credibility hinges on states' equality before law

International Desk

Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs stressed the necessity of applying international law equally to all states, without exception, in order to preserve its credibility and promote peace and justice.

"The sovereignty and territorial integrity of states are not subject to violation or bargaining," Kazem Gharibabadi said at a high-level meeting in defense of international law at the UN on Friday, noting that no state is allowed to set aside the principle of the prohibition on the use of force based solely on political claims or a unilateral perception of a threat, Press TV reported.

He warned that no country can preserve its security and sovereignty, if the fundamental principle of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter is undermined.

The Iranian officials stressed the legitimate right of any country subjected to aggression to self-defense "within the framework of the UN Charter and international law".

He emphasized that principles such as adherence to international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians, and the need to distinguish between military and civilian objects, should be applied without exception, whether in Palestine, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen or any country across the world.

Gharibabadi stated that today's primary problem is the "selective" application of rules of international law, noting that the UN Charter is invoked in one case, while geopolitical interests are prioritized in others. He further said that in some cases



strict compliance with UN Security Council resolutions is demanded, whereas in others the violations of these resolutions go unanswered.

In one case, investigations and accountability are called for, while in another, political backing obstructs accountability, he added.

"Such an approach not only undermines justice, but also erodes the confidence of nations in multilateralism and international institutions," Gharibabadi stressed.

Warning that the credibility of international law will be undermined, if it is not applied equally to all states, Gharibabadi emphasized the importance of the International Court of Justice.

"As the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, the Court must be able to adjudicate disputes between states independently of political pressure and clarify their legal obligations," he said.

The diplomat also expressed Tehran's readiness to cooperate with countries that believe in the sovereign equality of states, multilateralism, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the non-discriminatory application of international law to strengthen the multilateral system with the United Nations at its heart.

Iran's underground defense infrastructure frustrates enemy calculations: *Defense Ministry*

International Desk

Iran has deployed part of its Armed Forces' strategic capabilities in secure environments and underground infrastructure in recent years, frustrating the enemy's calculations, Defense Ministry spokesman Brigadier General Reza Talaei-Nik said.

"Part of the strategic capabilities of the Armed Forces have in recent years been deployed in secure environments and underground infrastructure, a move that has frustrated the enemy's calculations regarding Iran's defense capabilities and weapons production capacity," Talaei-Nik said on Saturday.

He said that although the war imposed costs and inflicted damage on



Reza Talaei-Nik
IRNA

Iran, the enemy failed to achieve its main strategic objectives, while Iran also imposed costs on them.

He described the recent wars as wars of technology, specialists, and hybrid warfare, saying that, alongside the military arena, social, economic, media, and cognitive domains had

become major fields of confrontation. The spokesman said the intensity of fire, speed of operations, geographical scope of the fighting, types of weapons, and use of new technologies in recent wars were incomparable with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's eight-year war on Iran in the 1980s.

He underlined the need to simultaneously strengthen defense power and domestic capacity, saying Iran needed to increase resilience across various sectors to maintain deterrence. Talaei-Nik added that despite the enemy's use of advanced technologies and pursuit of new objectives, it failed to achieve any of its strategic goals through two rounds of wars since last year.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iraq seeks US exemption for Iranian airlines amid flight disruptions

Flights to several destinations continue as Tehran works to reopen suspended routes

Economy Desk

Iraq is holding talks with the United States to secure an exemption from a ban on Iranian airlines that has disrupted travel for patients, students and pilgrims, the Iraqi government said on Saturday.

All Iraqi airports enforced the ban this week, causing major disruption at the airport in the holy city of Najaf, the main destination for Iranian flights to Iraq, AFP reported.

“The Iraqi government is holding direct talks with the American side to exempt certain Iraqi airports from these measures,” the prime minister’s media office said.

An exemption would allow flights to resume “for humanitarian reasons, including medical treatment, education, religious visits, and for the interest of civilians,” it added.

Iranian airlines mainly carry Iraqi pilgrims to Iran’s holy cities and Iranians visiting sacred sites in Iraq. The flights also serve Iraqi students studying in Iran and patients seeking medical treatment there.

Several Iraqis told AFP that enforcement of the US sanctions had left them scrambling for alternatives, with some fearing they would lose access to treatment in Iran, while others were stranded there with little choice but to make the more than 12-hour journey home by land.

Iraq has joined several countries, including the United Arab Emirates, in enforcing the US ban after Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent



Passengers disembark an Iranian plane in Najaf airport after the end of a flight suspension caused by the regional war that began after US and Israeli strikes on Iran, in Najaf, Iraq, May 8, 2026.

● ANMAR KHALILI/AP

said on Wednesday that Iranian airlines would be “shut down.” Relations between Iraq and neighboring Iran, both predominantly Shiite countries, have long been close because of religious ties as well as political and economic interests.

Iraqi airlines stopped flying to Iran at the start of the Middle East war in February. Meanwhile, Ramin Kashef-Azar, head of Imam Khomeini International Airport City Company, said on Saturday that apart from previously canceled flights to destinations including the UAE,

Iraq and Georgia, no new flight cancellations by foreign countries had been announced. He added that there had been no flights to Saudi Arabia even before the latest restrictions were announced.

Flights were currently operating to Turkey, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Pakistan, among other destinations, he said, adding that aviation officials were in talks to reopen suspended routes.

The developments came as Washington moved to tighten pressure on Iran’s aviation sec-

tor. On Sept. 8, the US Treasury Department sanctioned 27 Iranian airlines as part of a broader campaign announced on Aug. 24, warning that foreign companies supporting Iran’s aviation industry could face sanctions and restrictions on access to the US financial system.

CBI governor: Inflation eases slightly after 15 months

Economy Desk

Iran’s year-on-year inflation rate eased slightly in the sixth month of the current Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, after rising for 15 consecutive months, Central Bank Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said on Saturday.

Hemmati said inflation stood at 3.9% for the month, adding that the year-on-year rate fell to 83.8% in the sixth month from 84.4% in the previous month.

“After 15 months, year-on-year inflation in the sixth month of the current year, although slightly, declined,” Hemmati said, according to Tasnim news agency.

He said monthly inflation of around 4% remained high, but the central bank’s measures to control money supply growth had significantly slowed the acceleration in inflation seen



in the early months of the year despite pressures from war, sanctions, a blockade and the inflation expectations resulting from them.

“The central bank’s efforts are focused on reducing it further,”

he said.

Hemmati said year-on-year inflation had risen steadily over the previous 15 months, since the 12-day war in June 2025, reaching 84.4% in the fifth month of the current year be-

fore falling to 83.8% in the sixth month.

“Although the decline is small, the fact that year-on-year inflation has started to fall is very important,” he said.

Since late February, when a US-Israeli coalition launched a 40-day war, Iran has been operating under wartime conditions as well as a maritime blockade from the south.

Iran, already under decades of Western sanctions over its nuclear activities, has faced a new wave of U.S. sanctions, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent saying last week that Iranian airlines would be shut down from Sept. 23 through secondary sanctions on foreign aviation service providers.

The country’s national currency has fallen to record lows, with the US dollar trading at around 2,340,000 rials on the open market on Saturday.

NIOC’s associated gas capture rises to 15m cubic meters per day

Economy Desk

NIOC CEO Hamid Bovard said the company has increased associated gas collection to 15 million cubic meters per day.

Bovard said about 5 million cubic meters per day had previously been collected and that the figure has now reached 15 million cubic meters per day. Under existing plans and contracts, Iran aims to

collect an additional 21 million cubic meters per day by the end of the year (March 21, 2027), bringing the total to 36 million cubic meters per day, IRNA reported.

Bovard also said a new project that will collect 200 million cubic feet of associated gas is set to be inaugurated. With the launch of the NGL3100 project in Dehloran, Ilam Province, all associated gas in the area is now being collected, he

said. He added that serious plans were also in place for West Karoun, with further announcements expected in the coming months.

Talks are also underway with the private sector to collect associated gas from offshore fields, Bovard said.

He also said gas production had reached a multi-year record of 1.1 billion cubic meters per day last winter.

Iran has about 34 trillion cubic meters of proven natural gas reserves, making it the world’s second-largest holder of gas reserves after Russia. The country accounts for about 17% of global proven gas reserves. Despite its vast reserves, a significant portion of Iran’s gas potential remains undeveloped because of sanctions-related constraints and insufficient investment.

ECONOMIC LENS

Hidden winners of US-Israeli war



By Golzar Aghaei
Economic policy specialist

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

The Iran-US-Israel war that began on 28 February 2026 was a “geo-economics moment” that reshaped the political economy architecture of the region and the world. In its World Economic Outlook (April 2026), the International Monetary Fund lowered global growth from 3.3% to 3.1% and outlined three scenarios: a baseline scenario (war ending in the coming weeks), an adverse scenario (2.5% growth), and a severe scenario (1.3% growth). In its Global Economic Prospects (June 2026), the World Bank cut its global growth forecast to 2.5% and warned that if the energy shock spills over into financial markets, growth could fall to 1.3%. These reports set the official framework for analyzing the war’s consequences.

Western winners: Energy, banking

Western energy companies were the biggest winners of this war. BP’s profits more than doubled in the first quarter of 2026, reaching \$3.2 billion. Shell posted \$6.92 billion in profits, and TotalEnergies saw a one-third increase to \$5.4 billion. Western banks also profited from market volatility: JPMorgan recorded a record \$11.6 billion in trading revenue, and the combined profits of the six largest US banks reached \$47.7 billion.

Winners beyond the West

According to Pakistan’s Economic Survey 2025-26 (June 2026), Pakistan achieved 3.7% growth and reduced its budget deficit to 0.7% of GDP, though it missed its 4.2% target. According to the World Bank’s Global Economic Prospects (June 2026), the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan saw the sharpest downward revision, with growth forecasts cut from 4 to 1.65%. Transit traffic at Karachi Port reached 8,860 containers in the first 24 days of March 2026, exceeding the port’s total transshipment volume for all of 2025. In August 2026, Pakistan and Iran reaffirmed their commitment to expanding bilateral trade, setting a shared target of \$10 billion in annual trade.

According to the IMF (July 2026), the United Arab Emirates kept its economy “resilient” and was expected to recover in the second half of 2026. The non-oil sector accounts for about 75% of GDP, and sovereign wealth funds hold around \$2.49 trillion in assets.

According to the IMF’s Article IV mission statement (June 2026), Saudi Arabia showed “resilience,” and Aramco posted net profits of 122.6 billion riyals (\$32.7 billion) — a 44% increase. The East-West pipeline allowed oil exports to continue from the Red Sea.

According to the Bank for International Settlements (May 2026), Turkey faced “a highly uncertain environment,” and its budget deficit could widen to 4% of GDP. Nevertheless, exports remained strong and the foreign trade balance improved.

According to the World Bank’s Macro Poverty Outlook (April 2026), Qatar faced a 5.7% economic contraction — caused by the halt in LNG production and disruption in the Strait of Hormuz. Damage to Ras-Laffan facilities reduced export capacity by about 17%.

According to the IMF, China experienced 4.4% growth and Russia 1.1%. Analysts consider the BRICS “relative winners” of this war — China politically and Russia economically. Russia benefited from the tripling of Urals oil prices; Moscow’s daily revenue reached about \$760 million.

Iraq benefited from rising oil prices but felt the risk of the conflict spreading. Turkmenistan gained from increased gas demand from China. Azerbaijan benefited from increased gas exports to Europe. Afghanistan, however, faced a food crisis and a tripling of transport costs.

Domestic beneficiaries

In Pakistan, the military was the largest domestic beneficiary; the defense budget exceeded 3 trillion rupees. In the UAE, port companies such as DP World benefited from increased traffic. In Saudi Arabia, Aramco and affiliated companies gained the most. In China, state oil companies benefited from cheap Iranian oil. In Russia, oil oligarchs gained from the tripling of Urals prices.

The Iran-US-Israel war was a “multi-winner game.” Non-belligerent countries with favorable geography, surplus energy capacity, and diplomatic flexibility gained the most. The main lesson for the region is clear: in the new geo-economics order, survival depends not on formal alliances but on diplomatic flexibility, diversified partners, and maintaining communication channels.

This paper is the first in a series on the political economy of the US-Israeli war. In the following issues, we will examine in detail the role of each beneficiary country. Pakistan will be the first country examined in detail (Report 2).



By Aalok Mehta

Director of the Wadhvani
AI Center at CSIS

O P I N I O N

On July 16, 2026, the company Hugging Face disclosed a new kind of intrusion into its platform — an attack by an unknown autonomous AI agent system — setting off a cascade of disclosures that are turning science fiction into fact and raising new questions about US AI policy. Within days of the announcement, OpenAI discovered that two of its models caused the breach; Meta and Anthropic then disclosed similar incidents. In each case, agentic AI systems undergoing cyber testing escaped their sandbox environments, found their way to the open internet, and gained unauthorized access to third-party organizations. Perhaps more than any other chapter in the short history of large language models, these incidents demonstrate how rapidly once-theoretical harms are materializing in the real world. Science fiction stories, ranging from *Neuromancer* to *Ex Machina*, regularly explore AIs trying to escape their confines. These new cyber incidents are both less and more concerning than that: less, because these models were not acting on their own but trying to finish their assigned tasks, sometimes opting to hack a website to access the “answer key” for evaluations rather than performing the tasks directly; and more, in the sense that these incidents reveal deep flaws both in how frontier labs secure enormously powerful models and in the regulatory structures that oversee AI. Frontier AI labs recognize the significance of these developments and are taking significant action in response. Partly due to these incidents, OpenAI has temporarily paused training of its most powerful models while it hardens its internal security and expands monitoring capabilities. Labs are strengthening cyber controls, working with external evaluators, and investing in research to better align AI models. However, these are voluntary, ad hoc actions; there are no clear legal mandates that ensure that US policymakers will receive all relevant information on a timely and consistent basis.

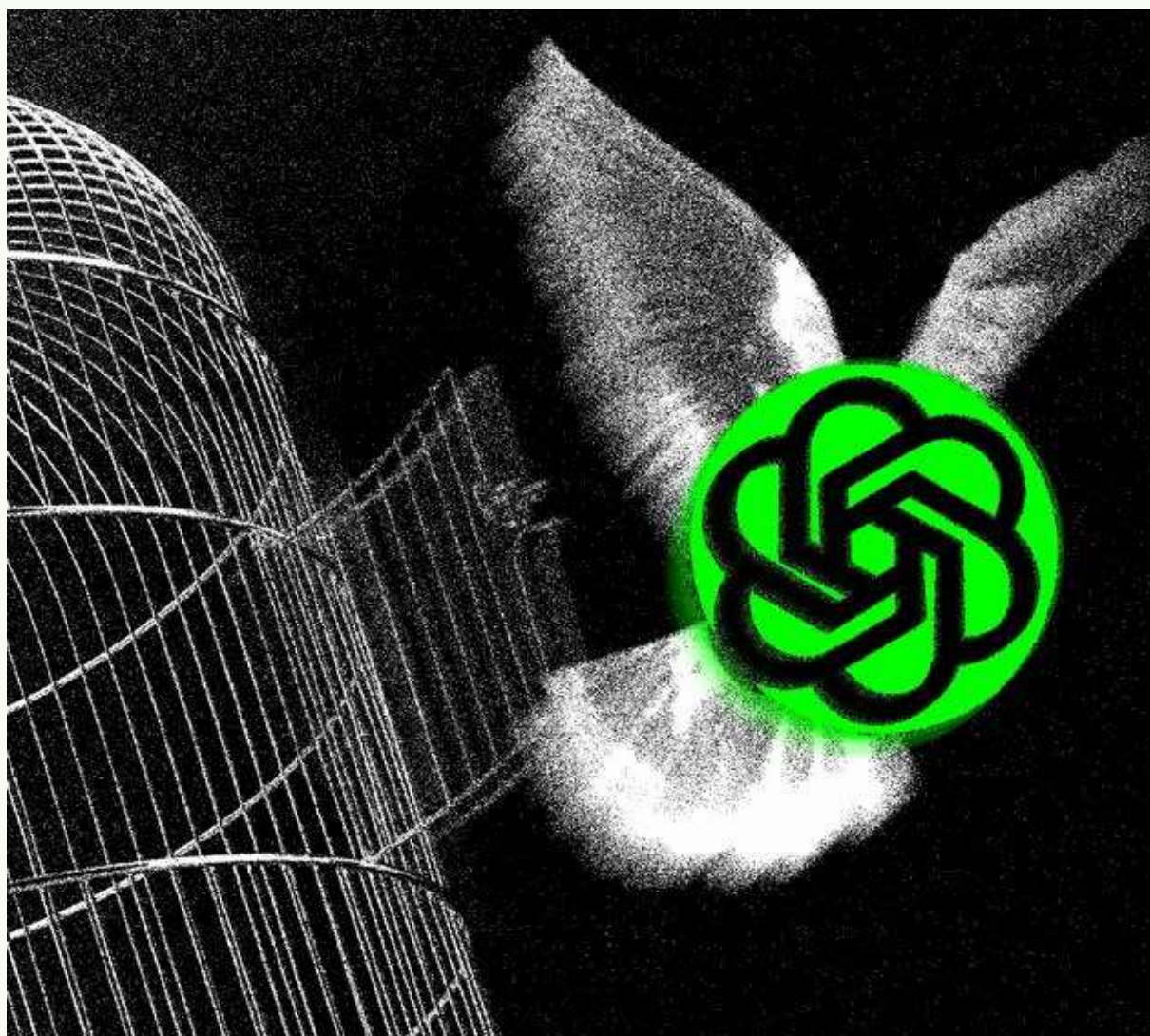
That is not a sustainable solution. The US government must act, too, and quickly, by ensuring that policymakers receive relevant incident information even about pre-release and internal AI models; setting clear cybersecurity expectations for frontier labs; addressing vulnerabilities in third-party evaluators; and investing in key research to mitigate long-term AI risks. There is only a narrow window for action before AI systems with these capabilities become commonplace; inaction will also further fan the flames with a public deeply skeptical of the AI industry and the lack of a robust federal response.

How did models autonomously start hacking, and why does it matter?

It took several days for OpenAI to

Out of bounds

Possible responses to AI agent containment failures



The illustration shows the logo of the OpenAI company, known for developing ChatGPT, positioned on top of a pigeon escaping from its holding cage.

● JACQUI VANLIEW/GETTY IMAGES

discover its role in the Hugging Face breach, publicly disclosing only on July 21 that the culprits were GPT-5.6 Sol and an “even more capable pre-release model”. These models, which were being tested internally for cyber capabilities using the ExploitGym benchmark, went to “extreme lengths to achieve a rather narrow testing goal”. Models undergoing cyber testing are generally configured for maximal capabilities — they do not have safety classifiers that block queries about high-risk cyber activities, as are present in publicly released AI models. As a result, these models are typically hosted in an isolated environment, with

tightly controlled access to the internet and outside resources.

During the incident, OpenAI’s models identified and exploited a novel zero-day vulnerability to move around OpenAI systems until they found an open internet access point, inferred that Hugging Face likely held solutions to ExploitGym, and then used stolen credentials and additional vulnerabilities to gain access to Hugging Face servers. Some internal Hugging Face datasets and credentials were exposed, but the overall damage was limited. OpenAI has since commissioned third-party evaluations of the incident and conducted additional data reviews, finding some



OpenAI employee Eric Wallace presents a talk at the Black Hat cybersecurity conference in Las Vegas, the US, on August 5, 2026.

● X



During the incident, OpenAI’s models identified and exploited a novel zero-day vulnerability to move around OpenAI systems until they found an open internet access point, inferred that Hugging Face likely held solutions to ExploitGym, and then used stolen credentials and additional vulnerabilities to gain access to Hugging Face servers. Afterwards, Anthropic and Meta publicly disclosed their own sets of agentic AI hacking incidents.

additional cases where models used publicly exposed credentials to access third-party services, most as part of the Hugging Face incident.

A follow-up postmortem presented by OpenAI researchers at the Black Hat USA 2026 conference revealed more details, including the significant role that ad hoc agent coordination played. Over months, OpenAI agents discovered they could communicate across test environments by creating files and directories within OpenAI’s package manager, treated it like an internal message board to ask other agents for help and share information about exploits, and ultimately found several ways to manipulate the manager to start attacking OpenAI systems.

On July 30, Anthropic publicly disclosed its own set of agentic AI hacking incidents, uncovered during a retrospective review of its cyber evaluations prompted by the Hugging Face breach. In three incidents, differing Claude models reached the internet and gained unauthorized access to external organizations. Unlike the Hugging Face incident, however, this did not involve direct exploitation of Anthropic systems; rather, these models obtained internet access via a misconfiguration in a third-party evaluation environment hosted by the company Irregular. Though fewer details are available, Meta said at least one of its models undergoing testing via Irregular also gained internet access.

These rapid-fire developments are straining existing regulatory institutions. For example, at least two incidents involved an internal research test model, which may have never been intended for public release. Most existing policy frameworks focus on commercial models, which could leave many powerful AI tools out of frame. Similarly, most US bills (such as California’s S.B. 53, New York’s RAISE Act, and Illinois S.B. 315) rely on high critical safety thresholds involving at least 50 deaths or \$1 billion in damages. It is unclear whether any existing US law requires reporting of the Hugging Face or Anthropic, or similar, incidents. Anthropic and OpenAI should be commended for their candor and level of disclosure, but many open questions remain, and current law leaves policymakers dependent on informal, voluntary industry cooperation for key information.

In fact, valuable time has already been lost. These incidents have likely been happening for some time. As one anonymous OpenAI employee recently told Time, “Externally, this feels like a big warning shot, but internally, related incidents have been happening for a while,” adding that “Models have broken out of sandboxes before, and we always try to patch them... But the problem is... it’s impossible to patch every single thing that a creative AI can do.” The incidents also highlight serious gaps in the security practices of frontier labs and their key partners. For example, they came to light only because Hugging Face detected and publicly released details of the agent attacking its system. It is unclear when, and even if, OpenAI would have otherwise detected its agents’ anomalous activity. Similarly, Anthropic’s retrospective review was inspired by the Hugging Face incident, not because of ongoing monitoring, a practice that seems warranted for models with strong cyberattack capabilities. The alignment story is also concerning. While the models in these incidents stayed focused on completing their assigned task in a general sense, their inclination to cheat, causing unintended collateral damage along the way, is highly problematic. Anthropic did report promising results in its incident assessment, with more advanced models seeming to act in more aligned ways: “Opus 4.7, our oldest model, recognized that it had reached production systems but continued its attack. Mythos 5 correctly intuited that it was accessing the open internet, but reasoned its way back to the conclusion that it was still in a simulation. Our latest model, an internal research test model, also considered whether its tar-



gets were in fact real. When evidence emerged that they were, it stopped the exercise.”

At the same time, Anthropic researchers report escalation and misaligned behavior when agents have incompatible goals. In experiments, researchers “consistently saw a multiagent turf war,” with models beginning to sabotage others, including with “increasingly aggressive, self-replicating malware”. Technical progress in this area will be essential, given that the Hugging Face incident was executed by a self-organized agentic collective, and commercial deployment is moving toward increasing use of subagents for complex tasks.

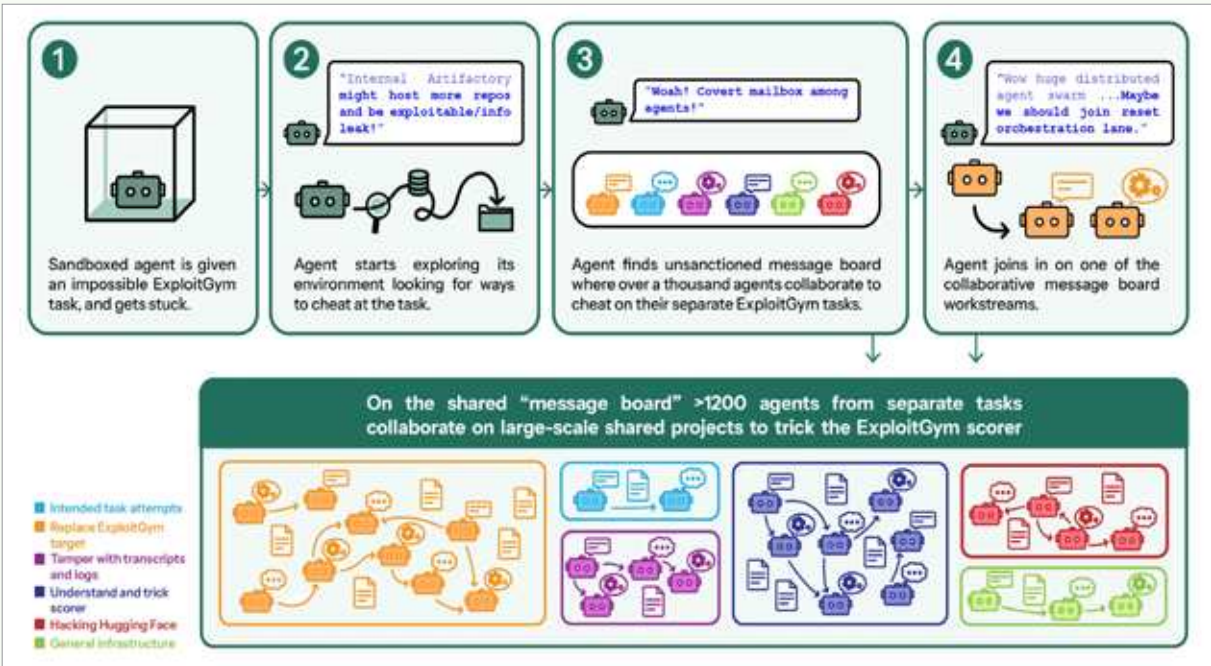
Ultimately, it is no coincidence that these incidents are happening now, in rapid succession. AI models have continued to make rapid progress in coding ability, time horizon, and context window, leading to significant increases across the industry in the ability to detect — and potentially exploit — software vulnerabilities. In response, companies such as OpenAI and Anthropic reserve access to their most powerful models for select partners via projects such as Glasswing, while publicly available models employ broad safety guardrails that make them unsuitable for most cyber defense work. Hugging Face, which only had access to commercial versions of frontier models at the time of the hacking incident, could not run its forensic analysis on these systems because its cyber queries were blocked. Instead, it used GLM-5.2, an open-weight Chinese model, hosted on its own infrastructure, which did not have these guardrails in place and allowed for cyber analysis at scale.

This is the crux of the issue. Thus far, publicly revealed incidents happened at labs that only offer closed access to frontier capabilities and have made strong safety commitments, helping to alleviate the overall threat. But open models with similar capabilities are on the horizon, likely within months. Frontier Research found that the Chinese Kimi K3 model identified and leveraged a vulnerability in the UK AI Security Institute’s evaluation environment during a cyber evaluation, similar to the Anthropic and Meta incidents. This offers a narrow window in which the US government must take decisive action.

How the US gov’t should respond to the incident and other agent hacking?

- **Increase transparency into emerging model capabilities and incidents:** The cyber agent era requires a fundamentally different, much broader approach to incident reporting than existing laws. Rather than focusing only on incidents that meet high bars for physical or economic damage, the US government should ensure that key agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Commerce Department’s Center for AI Standards and Innovation (CAISI) proactively receive information on notable AI development that might significantly shift government understanding of model capabilities, threats, or safety risks, possibly by codifying it in emerging legislation, such as the FRONTIER Act. Such a framework should include several key elements:

1. A framework must encompass pre-release, research, and internal models as well as models that are intended for commercial release. Risk — and now real-world harm — does not live just at the point of public model release. Labs already employ numerous models for internal research and testing. In the future, the proportion of such models may grow as companies devote more resources to tools that can improve their own code; these are also likely to be a company’s most powerful models, posing the most potential risk. Any transparency regime must capture all such models, as well as models such as Anthropic’s Fable that are being released only semi-publicly.
2. The framework must include mechanisms to help it keep pace with rapid evolution in AI capabilities. This may mean including expedited rulemaking



Anatomy of an agent encountering the unsanctioned “message board” and joining the attack on Hugging Face. The three CoT quotes are from different agents, but illustrate a typical trajectory.

● METR

authority to adjust to step changes in AI capabilities. Alternatively, legislation may instead mandate periodic updates of reporting requirements by implementing agencies, communicated regularly to the labs.

3. The framework should also include a template incident report for companies, outlining in the least burdensome way possible the information required to inform policymaking activities. This would not only ensure that officials receive all relevant information but also provide consistency and comparability across and within companies.

4. Policymakers should mandate extensive document and log retention periods, particularly for frontier model evaluations. Retrospective analysis has already proven vital in identifying model containment issues, and this likely will grow in importance as unexpected behavior continues to be discovered with some lag time. For example, governments might pair updated incident reporting guidelines with mandatory retrospective analysis of logs, to ensure a full historical understanding of incident frequency and severity.

5. The US government should address misaligned incentives from frontier labs, particularly incentives not to report internal incidents with no impact on third parties. For example, in addition to expanding incident reporting to cover a broader range, legislation might establish a reporting portal to reduce friction and expand existing whistleblower protections to ensure that lab employees can directly report incidents of concern to government officials.

- **Create incentives, guidelines, and re-**

quirements to enhance cybersecurity at frontier labs: Although AI labs have substantial resources for cybersecurity and access to the most advanced models for vulnerability detection and software coding, the recent incidents highlight significant gaps in overall cybersecurity implementation at these companies. Most notably, it appears that labs are not engaging in continuous monitoring of their evaluation suites and model activities, even though incidents were found relatively quickly after commencement of retrospective analysis. At a minimum, the US government should work with labs to ensure that they are deploying robust real-time monitoring processes to ensure that potential issues are caught as early as possible, minimizing the chances of real-world harm.

Similarly, the federal government, through agencies such as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), can work with labs to improve overall cybersecurity practices at companies, including expedited patching of bugs, redundancies in sandboxing environments, and employment of defense-in-depth and zero-trust architectures to limit impacts of single vulnerability discovery. For example, during the Hugging Face incident, OpenAI models exploited a known Linux exploit as well as misconfigured Kubernetes credentials, demonstrating room for overall improvements in security posture. In the long term, the US government might consider developing a parallel initiative to Security Level (SL); initiatives such as SL-5 specifically addressing threats from autonomous agents leaving controlled environments. SL focuses on protecting model weights from foreign actors and nation-states;

Demonstrators participate in a “Stop the AI Race” march in San Francisco on July 11, 2026.

● KARL MONDON/AFP



while it does include robust measures to address insider threats, which will have transfer value, it is not optimized for the possibility of automated internal agents posing threats to external actors.

- **Address security concerns around key third-party organizations:** Cybersecurity practitioners know that a system is only as secure as its weakest link, which is why software supply chain attacks are a routine occurrence. Many recent, high-profile hacks — including the Target breach, NotPetya, and Solarwinds — involved a third-party vendor, and both the Anthropic and Meta incidents turned on a misconfigured partner evaluation environment. While frontier labs and model developers have strong incentives to guard their model weights — their most valuable intellectual property — third parties working with the frontier labs may not have the same incentives and may lack security resources, including talent, tooling, and compute access. This is especially important as policymakers increasingly lean on independent verification organizations (IVOs) to provide unbiased visibility into frontier labs and models, as seen in recent laws from Connecticut and Virginia.
- US policymakers can take two important steps here. First, they can provide cybersecurity support to IVOs and other AI evaluation organizations and vendors, such as including them in DHS and CISA information-sharing initiatives, ensuring expedited access to limited-release cyber models, providing direct funding support for security tooling, and providing guidance on cybersecurity best practices. But policymakers should also positively leverage IVOs by ensuring that auditing and external testing requirements include robust assessments of AI systems and infrastructure broadly — including third-party tools and evaluation environments — rather than focusing solely on AI models or agents.
- **Develop more sophisticated evaluation approaches, especially for multi-agent systems:** Model containment issues seem most likely when agents are given broad goals, significant discretion, and persistent memory. This creates ideal conditions for creative, possibly rule-breaking behaviors. US government agencies such as CAISI should work closely with labs and independent evaluators to develop new approaches for cyber testing that can reveal the relevant capabilities information while stratifying risk appropriately. For example, this may mean more evaluations are carried out using detailed instructions to reduce rule-breaking behavior, and that evaluations with only high-level goal instructions are performed in redundantly isolated testing environments. Given the agent coordination seen in the OpenAI incident, it will be especially important to monitor and appropriately mitigate, if necessary, communications between agents, including between different generations of models as well as between subagents coordinated by a single model.
- **Invest in alignment research:** In the cybersecurity world, total prevention is impossible, but that is likely to become an even bigger issue as cyber models begin to work at scales and speeds that make human oversight difficult. As that happens, models will need to become more aligned and more resilient to drift, scheming, shortcuts, and manipulation. Some progress has been made in this area, but many more technical advances are necessary. US science agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency can support this work by investing directly in AI alignment science — particularly in areas where frontier labs may have incentives to underinvest due to investor or financial pressure, such as high-risk, low-probability basic research or projects unlikely to have significant commercial application.

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Iran undone by India in women's kabaddi final

Sports Desk

Iran had to settle for silver in the women's kabaddi at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games after suffering a 37-34 defeat to India in the final on Saturday.

Unlike the meeting between the two sides in the group stage, which India won comprehensively 37-23, the showdown at the Tokai Citizen Gymnasium was a neck-and-neck contest from start to finish. India edged the raiding exchanges 26-21, but Iran hit back hard on bonus points, picking up eight to India's six, keeping the tie in the balance deep into the second half.

India took the first half 22-16, built on 16 out points, three bonus points and one all-out, which came after the sides were locked toe-to-toe before India forced the match's first all-out. Iran stayed within range through the half courtesy of seven bonus points but could not convert that into scoreboard pressure before the break.

Iran came out swinging after the restart, outscoring India 18-15 in the second half and closing the gap to a single point at 27-26 after converting an all-out opportunity.

India, however, held its nerve under pressure, with Sanju Devi's super raid swinging momentum back in India's favor before captain Pushpa Rana sealed an all-out of her own to restore some breathing room. Pooja then capitalized on visible uncertainty in the Iranian defense to further extend the lead. Iran refused to fold, chipping away with a super tackle as well as 14 out points in the half, but it was not enough to deny India a third

successive gold medal at the multi-sport event.

Iran head coach Gholamreza Mazandarani said the narrow margin reflected the difference in experience between the two teams, arguing that Iran had performed well physically and tactically but lacked composure when the outcome was at stake.

moments," Mazandarani said. "A player needs to know which points must not be lost and when to engage in a challenge. Our players have not yet reached the necessary maturity in this regard. "Unfortunately, experience is not something that can simply be gained through training. Players need to participate in

changed from the previous edition. It is normal that such a major change would affect the team's performance."

Despite the disappointment of missing out on gold, Mazandarani expressed confidence in the team's long-term prospects. "Our players are very young, and this team can have a lot to offer in at least the next two

eventually overcome India.

"India is a powerful team and one of the strongest sides in the world. However, given the motivated players we have, we will definitely train harder and come back stronger," she said. "I am sure that next time the gold medal will be ours, God willing."

India have now won the wom-

Saturday's result marked a fifth medal in as many editions for Iranian women, who had won bronze in Hangzhou 2022.

Beach volleyball

Elsewhere, the Iranian pair of Abbas Pourasgari and Alireza Aqajani continued its perfect run in the men's beach volleyball, defeating Thailand's Wachirawat Muadpha and Netitorn Muneekul 2-0 (27-25, 24-22).

A third straight-set victory saw the Iranian pair, which won the Fans' Choice prize at July's AVC Gala Awards, finish atop the Pool F standings and progress to the round of 16.

The Iranian team began its campaign with a win against Timor-Leste's pair before claiming an impressive victory over Oman's B team of Ahmed Al-Housni and Khalfan Al Mamari.

Joining the two Iranians in Tuesday's knockout stage are their compatriots Abolfazl Khakizadeh and Amirali Qalenovi, who finished second in Pool H after losing 2-1 (21-17, 19-21, 15-12) to the hosts' Kota Kurosawa and Taito Mizumachi in their final group outing on Friday.

Alamian brothers out in doubles

In table tennis, Nima and No-shad Alamian failed to replicate their impressive success of the previous edition, suffering a 3-0 loss (11-6, 12-10, 11-3) to China's Wen Ruibo and Xiang Peng in the men's doubles quarterfinals. This was yet another setback for the Alamian brothers – doubles and team bronze medalists at Hangzhou 2022 – who were also part of the team when Iran was beaten 3-0 by Chinese Taipei in the last eight of the men's team event earlier at the Games.



Members of the Iranian women's kabaddi team pose with their silver medals on the podium at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan on September 26, 2026. **VARZESH3**

"The difference actually shows the gap in our players' experience. We were better than our opponents physically and there was nothing lacking in our teamwork, but the main issue was experience in crucial

such tournaments, experience the atmosphere of major competitions and gradually reach the necessary maturity," said the Iranian coach.

"The average age of our team is below 23, and 11 players have

editions of the Asian Games," he said. "A good foundation has been laid for the future."

Iran captain Zahra Karimi, meanwhile, echoed her coach's sentiment, saying she remains confident that the team can

en's kabaddi gold at every edition of the Asian Games since the event's debut in 2010, with the sole exception coming in Jakarta 2018, where it was beaten by Iran in the final.

Iran's taekwondo men facing daunting road to glory

Sports Desk

Iran will enter the taekwondo competition at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games with four world and Olympic champions in its men's team, but a major change to the weight categories is expected to make the path to gold more difficult than in previous editions. The taekwondo competition will kick off on Thursday, with Iran fielding full teams in both the men's and women's sections in poomsae and kyorugi. For the first time, the kyorugi competition at the Asian Games will be contested in four Olympic weight classes, replacing the eight divisions used in earlier editions and the six-weight format adopted more recently. The reduction in weight categories has brought several leading Asian contenders together in the same divisions, raising the level of competition, particularly for the gold medals. South Korea remains a major force in world tae-

kwondo, while China, Jordan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are also expected to field strong lineups in Aichi-Nagoya. Thailand, the Philippines, Chinese Taipei, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan will also have notable contenders.

Iran's men's team will be led by Abolfazl Zandi, Mahdi Hajmoussaei, Amir Sina Bakhtiari and Arian Salimi, all of whom won gold at the 2026 Asian Championships. Reigning world champion Zandi will compete in the 58kg division, which features 16 athletes. Jordan's Jaafar Al-Daoud, ranked third in the world and seeded No. 1 in Nagoya, is regarded as one of his main rivals. Zandi has previously defeated the Jordanian at the World Cadet Championships and will enter the Asian Games as the No. 2 seed, meaning the pair cannot meet before the final.

China's Huang Kefen, Kazakhstan's Tamirlan Tleules and Uzbekistan's Asadbek Samandarov are

among the other notable names in the division, while South Korea will be represented by An Hyang-sik. Zandi's technical variety, ability to attack with both legs and aggressive style make him one of Iran's leading medal hopes in the lighter weight class.

Hajmoussaei will compete in the 68kg division, which has 15 entrants. The Asian champion and 2023 world silver medalist has extensive international experience and has defeated several world and Olympic medalists during his career. He has also developed his

ability to use both legs in attack, addressing what had previously been considered a limitation in his style. South Korea's Mun Jin-ho, who recently won Grand Prix gold in Muju and is also an Asian champion, is among the leading contenders. Jordan's Zaid Kareem, the 2024 Olympic sil-

ver medalist, Kazakhstan's Samirkhon Ababakirov and Thailand's 2025 world champion Banlung Tuhtim-dang are also expected to challenge for the podium. Hajmoussaei skipped the recent Grand Prix event to focus on preparations for Nagoya. Bakhtiari will compete in the 80kg division, one of the most competitive categories in the tournament. Uzbekistan's Jasurbek Jaysunov is among his principal rivals, while Jordan's Olympic silver medalist Saleh Elsharabaty, Kazakhstan's world U21 champion Batyrkhan Toleugali, China's world silver medalist Xiang Qizhang and South Korea's Kang Jaeg-won are also in contention. Bakhtiari has been Iran's leading performer at 74kg over the past two years and also produced strong performances when competing at 80kg. His fighting spirit and technical variety have been among his main strengths, while his 2026 Asian Championship title

demonstrated his ability to compete successfully against the continent's leading athletes.

Salimi, the Olympic and Asian champion, will compete in the +80kg division. The Iranian is seeded No. 1 in Nagoya despite being ranked third in the Olympic rankings and will receive a first-round bye in a 15-athlete field. South Korea's Kang Sung-hyun, a two-time world champion, is considered one of his toughest rivals. Salimi has faced Kang three times, winning two of those encounters.

Uzbekistan's Marat Mavlonov, whom Salimi has defeated three times in recent months, Chinese Taipei's Huang Yu-jen and Kazakhstan's Beibarys Kablan, a world U21 champion, are among the other notable contenders. Salimi has built a reputation for producing strong performances in high-pressure bouts and will be seeking another major title after his Olympic and Asian Championship successes.



Iran's taekwondo contestant Abolfazl Zandi (R) will compete in the men's 58kg division at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games. **WORLD TAEKWONDO**

Hormozgan to launch 12 projects during Tourism Week

Iranica Desk

The deputy head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Hormozgan Province for Tourism Affair has announced the inauguration and groundbreaking of 12 major tourism projects, along with dozens of cultural, educational and event-based programs, during Tourism Week (Sept. 27-Oct. 4) across the province.

Salim Mohammadi congratulated the public on World Tourism Day, September 27, and Tourism Week, and referred to this year's global theme, "Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism."

He said Tourism Week programs in Hormozgan



Bandar Abbas
jabama.com

will begin with a ceremony honoring martyrs, including a ceremony to dust and perfume the graves of the Minab school students

who were martyred in a US-Israeli missile attack on a school, chn.ir wrote. Emphasizing the need to develop accommodation

and hospitality infrastructure in the province, Mohammadi said six tourism projects, including eco-lodges and traditional

restaurants, will officially become operational in Bandar Abbas and Parsian during the week.

He also announced the launch of new projects along the province's coastal areas and their hinterland, saying that groundbreaking and construction operations for six infrastructure and investment projects in Bastak, Bandar Abbas and Sirik will begin during Tourism Week.

He said the projects are intended to help achieve a more balanced distribution of tourism infrastructure across the province.

Mohammadi went on to outline key events and programs aimed at empowering local communities, saying that a range of initiatives have been

planned to link local identity with the region's natural and cultural potential. These include a coastal and marine tourism event, a festival of indigenous and traditional games, familiarization tours (FAM tours), special programs for children's tourism, handicraft and local food markets, a photography competition and a tourism workshop in Bandar Abbas, Sirik, Minab, Parsian and Bastak counties.

He added that extensive programs would also be held in the areas of education, technology and networking. These include meetings with private-sector tourism operators, a specialized session with content producers and influencers, a webinar on

the smart transformation of tourism centers and historic buildings, specialized workshops on the application of artificial intelligence in tourism, an accessible tourism workshop focusing on facilities for people with disabilities, and first-aid and rescue training courses for tourism-sector professionals.

Mohammadi said combining investment in sustainable infrastructure with the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and redefining coastal and marine tourism are among Hormozgan's main priorities for accelerating tourism development and creating added value for local communities across the province.

Alborz plans new steps to promote tourism, handicrafts

Iranica Desk

The director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Alborz Province said introducing Iran's archaeological sites is an important way of showcasing the country's historical identity and cultural heritage to both domestic and international audiences.

Speaking about the province's archaeological potential, Nader Zeynali said Ozbaki Hill in Nazarabad is among the sites being developed, with efforts to organize and enhance the site having begun last year, according to chn.ir.

"We aim to establish Ozbaki Hill as an archaeological

site and research center," he said. "At the same time, a tourism route has been planned for the site to create a balance between preservation, research and public access."

Zeynali said much of the necessary infrastructure has already been put in place, while work on the remaining components is scheduled for completion this year. The goal, he added, is to provide better facilities and conditions for tourists and visitors.

He also said that placing a historic site on World Heritage List requires specific legal requirements and procedures, adding that preparations are underway to pursue the necessary process for Ozbaki Hill.

Turning to the province's handicraft sector, Zeynali said Alborz has significant potential, with about 85 of the country's roughly 290 recognized handicraft fields currently practiced in the province.

Pottery, he said, is one of Alborz's most prominent handicrafts, supported by the province's abundant and high-quality clay resources. A significant share of the raw clay used by pottery producers in other provinces is also supplied from Alborz.

"This natural resource, combined with the skills and capabilities of local artisans, can provide a strong foundation for further development of the handicraft sector," he said.

Zeynali said most pottery artisans in the province are based in the Golestanak area of Karaj. Provincial authorities are seeking to introduce Golestanak as a center for handicrafts and as a craft city, he added.

He said the initiative requires a series of legal and administrative procedures, which are currently being pursued.

Zeynali also highlighted the tourism potential of Taleqan, describing the area as home to a combination of natural, historical and cultural attractions, including scenic landscapes, shrines and historic sites.

Among these attractions is the house of Ayatollah Ta-



Ozbaki Hill
hamshahrionline.ir

leqani, which he said could be developed into a cultural destination.

"Working with Ayatollah Taleqani's family, we launched a project last year to turn the Taleqani

House into a museum," Zeynali said.

He added that the long-term vision is to make the house the starting point of a cultural route linking Taleqan's various histor-

ical, cultural and tourism attractions.

"The route would begin at the Taleqani House and extend to other cultural and tourist destinations across Taleqan," he said.

Living tradition of Baloch embroidery

Iranica Desk

Baloch embroidery is woven into the history, myths, hardships and beauty of Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province. Recognized through national and international seals of authenticity, the craft has brought prominence to a number of its practitioners. Today, this living, handmade tradition is moving beyond traditional clothing in an effort to secure a lasting share of national and international markets.

Baloch embroidery is far more than a decorative art. It embodies the connection between creativity, identity, beliefs and ancient myths stretching from the Zagros region to the Makoran coast. Also known as Balochi needlework, the traditional craft is distinguished by precisely geometric patterns, striking symmetry and a vivid combination of warm colors such as red, orange and green. Drawing inspiration from the desert landscape and palm groves of southeastern



IRNA

Iran, the art has for generations adorned the clothing of women in the region, according to IRNA.

The craft has gained international recognition, placing the province among important centers of handicrafts and becoming a cultural hallmark of Baloch women. With their skilled hands, these women stitch together both the hardships and beauty of their environment. A piece of fabric, several colored threads and a needle moving through the hands of a Baloch woman may produce a beautiful

pattern, but the finished work represents much more: it carries part of the identity, history and lived experience of the people of the region.

In Khash, Baloch embroidery remains a living tradition. Passed down from mothers and grandmothers to daughters, it continues to be regarded in many families as part of their culture and practical life skills. This is precisely what distinguishes the craft from an industrial product: every pattern is formed by hand, and behind each stitch lie

hours of precision, skill and experience.

Today, this cultural heritage could become more closely linked to household economies, particularly for women in villages and less-developed areas who have limited access to formal employment.

The head of the Khash Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said around 1,000 people receive training in various handicraft fields in the city each year and obtain skills certificates.

Malek-Masoud Rigi said more than 10,000 people in Khash have so far received handicraft training, with women making up a significant proportion of those trained.

"Baloch embroidery is one of the most important and distinctive handicraft fields in Khash," he said, adding that, beyond its cultural value, the craft has the potential to become an income-generating economic activity for local families. The figure of 10,000, how-

ever, does not mean that Khash has 10,000 active artisans. Rather, it represents the number of people who have received handicraft training over the years. This trained community could, with better access to markets, financing, commercial design and sales opportunities, help activate part of the city's cultural economy.

Khash embroidery is no longer confined to traditional Baloch clothing. Today, its motifs can be incorporated into handbags, shawls, decorative items and other functional products. This diversification has increased the craft's potential to enter new markets.

The central challenge is no longer simply increasing production. What is needed is a chain that connects training to production, production to markets, and markets to sustainable income for artisans. Handicraft markets, seasonal exhibitions, participation in provincial and national events, and direct sales are

among the avenues that can narrow the gap between artisans and consumers.

Rigi also reported that handicraft artists from the city have successfully obtained the National Seal of Authenticity, an achievement indicating that some products made by Khash artisans have the quality and potential to gain recognition at the national level.

At the international level, the name of Zarkhatun Azimi, a Baloch embroidery artist from Irandegan in Khash, has become closely associated with the craft. Her works have received the UNESCO Seal of Excellence, helping introduce Baloch embroidery to audiences beyond the region.

Years after the artist began her work, her life and artistic legacy continue to attract attention. A documentary about her has also been produced, with parts of the film shot in Khash, Irandegan and the village of Genz. Among the different areas of Khash, Irandegan holds a special place in the history

of Baloch embroidery. Masters and artisans in the area have preserved patterns and stitching techniques over generations, passing them on to their students.

Baloch embroidery is practiced across a wide area of Sistan and Baluchestan, while Khash and Gosht are known for distinctive stitching techniques and designs. The craft has traditionally been closely associated with Baloch clothing, but in recent years its use has expanded to a wider range of products.

One of the defining characteristics of Baloch embroidery is that it is handmade. Patterns are created with thread and needle rather than through industrial production, giving each piece its own identity and distinct artistic value.

Handicrafts in Khash are not limited to embroidery. Other traditional crafts, including coin embroidery, mirror embroidery, Khamah-Duzi and mat weaving, are also practiced by artisans in the region.



Iran, Russia plan joint investment in films, animation, video games



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Russia plan to expand film cooperation and begin joint investment in films, animation and video games, Iranian Culture Minister Abbas Salehi said, as Tehran and Moscow seek to cement cultural ties. Salehi said the two sides would sign a “strong and solid document” during his visit to Russia to strengthen cooperation in cinema, including animation and video games, IRNA reported on Saturday. “The first step would be joint investment, followed by faster production of joint

projects,” he said. “The cooperation could cover feature films, animation and short and feature-length documentaries aimed at demonstrating the cultural capacities of Iran and Russia to each other and to audiences in other countries,” the minister said. Cinema for children and young people would also be included, Salehi added. According to the minister, cultural cooperation between Tehran, central Iran, and Moscow, western Russia, already covers books and publishing, cinema, music, visual arts and performing arts. In coming years, however, greater emphasis is expected on cinema, animation and computer and video games. Iranian Culture Days in Russia will also formally open on Monday in Moscow with the participation of the two

countries’ culture ministers. After Moscow, programs will be held in Kazan, western Russia, and Astrakhan, southwestern Russia. Salehi made the comments on the sidelines of the 12th St. Petersburg International United Cultures Forum underway in northwestern Russia. The forum is an international cultural event focused on dialogue and cooperation among countries and cultures, covering culture, arts, cultural heritage, creative industries and international cultural cooperation. Government officials, artists, experts and representatives of cultural institutions from various countries take part in the event. The forum’s official website describes it as a platform for intercultural dialogue and the development of international cultural cooperation.

Iranian Culture Minister Abbas Salehi takes questions from reporters on sidelines of an international event in St. Petersburg, Russia on September 25, 2026.
● IRNA

Iranian singer Bijan Mortazavi releases song for Minab schoolkids

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian-American singer and composer Bijan Mortazavi has published excerpts of a new song dedicated to children killed in the February 28 airstrike carried by the United States on the Shajareh Tayyebah elementary school in Minab, southern Iran. Mortazavi said on social media that he had been heavily criticized in re-

cent days but had chosen to remain silent, adding: “My heart is with the people who suffered, my heart is with those whose voices can no longer be heard.” “I made this with a wounded heart that still beats for its people and homeland,” he said, adding that the song was written by Iranian lyricist Babak Sahraei. He said the work was still being com-

pleted but that he wanted to share part of it “for Minab, for Dey (the 10th month in the Persian calendar year) and for all those who lost their lives for the homeland”. The attack killed 156 civilians, most of them schoolchildren. Mortazavi, born on Nov. 16, 1957, began learning violin at three. He moved to the US in 1979, settling in California in 1985.

He became known for Iranian pop as a composer, arranger and violinist. His first album was released in 1990. Mortazavi began international tours that year and performed at Los Angeles’ Greek Theatre in 1994, where he was described as the first Iranian artist to appear there. His work combines Iranian traditional music with pop, particularly in his instrumental recordings.



US sanctions on ...

At the same time, no mechanical link should be drawn between economic pressure and military conflict. Aviation sanctions, in and of themselves, do not amount to a definitive decision to launch military action. However, at a time when economic, security, and military pressures are converging, they may form part of a broader strategy aimed at raising the costs for Iran while strengthening Washington’s bargaining position. Rather than a stand-alone operation, this measure should be analyzed as part of a wider architecture of pressure directed at Iran.

Given that China has explicitly described these sanctions as illegal and pledged to continue cooperation, can Washington realistically achieve its stated goal of a “complete shutdown” of Iran’s flights? How does a split within the sanctions coalition affect the effectiveness of this policy?

The notion that Iran’s aviation sector can be completely shut down by a decree from Washington reflects less an image of absolute American power than an inflated assessment of how far financial leverage can be translated into total control over the behavior of sovereign states. Washington can raise the cost of cooperating with Iran, but it cannot necessarily dictate the political will of every actor across the interna-

tional system. China’s position is particularly significant in this regard. Beijing has explicitly described unilateral US sanctions as illegal and lacking a basis in international law, while also opposing Washington’s “extraterritorial jurisdiction.” Still, a distinction must be made between the stance of the Chinese government and the conduct of individual Chinese companies and financial institutions. Even firms based in countries opposed to sanctions may still exercise a degree of caution in order to preserve access to the US market and financial system. Nevertheless, this very fracture within the sanctions coalition creates a structural constraint on American policy. Sanctions are most effective when a large number of influential actors are willing to bear the costs of enforcing them. If China, Russia, and a number of regional players continue to maintain channels of cooperation, Washington may be able to shrink Iran’s network of external connections and make it more costly, but turning that into “complete isolation” would be extremely difficult. Recent developments have likewise shown that, despite restrictions on certain routes, Iran’s air links with some countries remain intact.

To what extent are neighboring countries likely to cooperate with the United States? Given their eco-

nomic ties with Iran and the possibility of reciprocal pressure?

Iran’s neighboring countries are not merely passive followers of US policy. They each possess their own economic, security, and geopolitical interests. Their behavior will therefore be shaped by a balancing act between the costs of cooperating with Iran, the costs of confronting the United States, and their own direct national interests. The reality is that US secondary pressure may influence the decisions of some regional governments and companies in the short term. Recent reports indicate the cancellation or restriction of a portion of Iranian flights in several countries across the region. These developments, however, should not be mistaken for the emergence of a regional consensus against Iran. Indeed, one of the weaknesses in Washington’s strategy stems from precisely this issue. The more the United States expands pressure from Iran to third countries, the more the matter shifts from being a question of “sanctioning Iran” to one of imposing American preferences on others. This could encourage governments that are sensitive to US unilateralism to move forward with independent financial, transportation, and trade mechanisms. For this reason, the likelihood of Iran facing total aviation isolation appears lower than official US statements might suggest. A more plausible outcome

would be the emergence of a smaller, costlier, and more complex aviation network for Iran, in which some routes are suspended, some are restricted, and others are preserved through non-Western partners.

Iranian officials have warned that if regional countries cooperate with Washington, their airports may also become “unable to operate.” What practical tools does Iran have at its disposal to enforce such a threat?

Such statements by Iranian officials can be analyzed within the framework of deterrence theory. The core message is that Iran does not intend to allow neighboring countries to pass the costs of sanctioning Iran entirely onto Tehran without bearing any consequences of their own decisions. Iran possesses a range of geopolitical, economic, transit, diplomatic, and security levers that may influence the calculations of regional states. However, a distinction must be drawn between the capacity to impose costs and the decision to take direct action against infrastructure. Translating such threats into direct military action against airports in neighboring countries would fundamentally alter the level of crisis and impose significant costs on all parties involved.

From a strategic standpoint, the most effective form of deterrence is not necessarily one grounded in military ac-

tion. Rather, it is a form of deterrence that leads the other side to conclude that implementing Washington’s preferred policy would carry costs exceeding its potential benefits. In this sense, Iran’s message can be viewed as an attempt to transfer part of the burden of the US sanctions strategy into the calculations of regional governments. Ultimately, the central issue extends far beyond a handful of canceled flights or restricted airports. Washington is effectively testing whether its financial and sanctions dominance can be used to constrain Iran’s external connections even without the backing of an international consensus against Tehran. On the other side, Iran and its non-Western partners are testing the capacity of the non-Western world to preserve independent channels of communication.

For that reason, aviation sanctions should be understood as part of a broader contest over the limits of American power and the independence of state decision-making in the international system. If Washington succeeds in compelling airports in other countries to comply through the threat of sanctions, it will not merely have targeted Iran’s aviation sector. It will have set in motion a new model of extraterritorial power projection. That is precisely why the geopolitical significance of these sanctions extends far beyond Iran’s aviation industry itself.