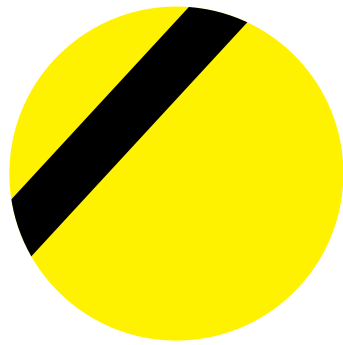


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China hosts global forum to push for fairer world order



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi addresses the 2026 Global Governance Forum in Xiong'an, China, on October 23, 2026.
● [DELARAM AHMADI/IRAN DAILY](#)

By [Delaram Ahmadi](#)
Staff writer

REPORT EXCLUSIVE

The Global Governance Forum opened in Xiong'an, northern China, on Friday, bringing together international officials, experts and policymakers to discuss reforming global institutions and strengthening cooperation on shared challenges. The three-day forum, running from October 23 to 25 in Hebei Province, has attracted more than 180 overseas guests from over 90 countries, alongside more than 180 Chinese participants. Its program includes 22 seminars across five thematic areas. Addressing the opening ceremony, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for stronger in-

ternational governance of the deep sea, polar regions and outer space. He also said artificial intelligence should remain under human control and be used for the benefit of humanity. Wang described the rise of the Global South as the most momentous shift the world has witnessed since World War II, calling for greater representation of developing countries in international affairs. He also reiterated the need to safeguard the multilateral trading system. The gathering reflects China's efforts to promote a more representative international order. President Xi Jinping introduced the forum last year as part of Beijing's broader push for multilateralism and reform of global governance arrangements. China proposed its Global Governance Initiative on September

1, 2025, during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Plus meeting. The initiative rests on five principles: sovereign equality, the rule of law in international affairs, multilateralism, a people-centered approach and practical action. Wu Ken, president of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, which organizes the forum, said the meeting aims to translate shared ideas into practical solutions and strengthen international cooperation. Zhou Mi, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the forum offered an opportunity to find common ground as economic and technological developments create new challenges for international trade. He stressed that no country could address these issues

alone or resolve them by unilaterally changing international economic rules. China has also linked its governance initiative to international peace and security, emphasizing respect for national sovereignty, international law and dialogue. Beijing has called for a lasting ceasefire in Gaza and supported diplomatic efforts to resolve the Ukraine conflict. On technology, China advocates international cooperation to expand access to artificial intelligence and its benefits, while emphasizing digital sovereignty and countries' rights to pursue their own development. The forum is also intended to showcase Xiong'an's experience in urban planning and governance and promote exchanges between Chinese and international participants.

Iran urges end to selective implementation of IAEA statute

International Desk

Iran's permanent mission to international organizations in Vienna criticized the International Atomic Energy Agency's double standards and silence over US and Israeli military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, calling on the agency to end selective enforcement of its obligations and return to the principles of impartiality, independence and full implementation of its statute.

In a statement marking the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the IAEA Statute, the Iranian mission said the agency could not remain silent in the face of attacks on nuclear facilities under safeguards while claiming to uphold the credibility of the safeguards system.

The mission described the silence of the agency's governing bodies and secretariat over the military attacks by the US and Israel on Iranian nuclear facilities as a "serious and unprecedented institutional failure". It also warned

of the consequences of politicization, breaches of information confidentiality and discriminatory treatment of member states.

Iran further pointed to the absence of comprehensive safeguards oversight over Israel's nuclear activities, urging the IAEA Board of Governors and director general to put an end to double standards, ensure the full and balanced implementation of the agency's statute and respect the legitimate rights of member states.

The implementation of the statute over the past seven decades had produced achievements in important areas, the statement said. However, its failure to be implemented fully, consistently, effectively and without discrimination under all circumstances and toward all member states has diverted the agency from its fundamental purpose and core priorities, weakened the principles governing its work, undermined its professionalism and eroded its authority and credibility.

"The undeniable reality is that the statute is the constitution of the agency, not a document that can be invoked selectively or interpreted on the basis of the interests of powerful states or a group of states," the mission said.

The statement cited a persistent disparity between the scrutiny and inspections applied to Iran and the absence of comprehensive safeguards covering all of Israel's nuclear activities.

This disparity raised fundamental questions about the credibility and consistency of international nuclear non-proliferation norms, the mission added.

A credible, comprehensive and non-discriminatory approach to nuclear verification across the Middle East is a legitimate demand and a long-standing objective of regional states that are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the statement said, adding that regional security could not be built on selective



REUTERS

oversight and unequal expectations. US and Israeli military strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities in 2025 and 2026 constituted serious and substantive violations of the peremptory norm of international law prohibiting

aggression, the statement said. The attacks posed a grave challenge to nuclear safety and security, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the credibility of the IAEA and the integrity of its safeguards system, it added.

IRGC warns US over encouraging ships to transit unauthorized routes in Hormuz

International Desk

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) threatened to strike American bases across the Middle East if the US military continues to encourage ships transit through the unauthorized routes in the Strait of Hormuz.

"The US military must know that if this trend continues, the conflict will extend to its bases in the region," the IRGC said in a statement.

"This is a serious warning," they added.

The IRGC Navy said that four vessels were hit while transferring oil cargoes between ships in the northern-central Persian Gulf, while three other vessels suffered accidents and caught fire after striking mines west of the Strait of Hormuz. The IRGC said the four vessels had previously taken illegal routes despite earlier warnings to maritime companies it accused of being



The Chinese-flagged container shipping vessel Hui Fa transits the Gulf of Oman off the coast of Khor Fakkan in the emirate of Sharjah in the east of the UAE on October 13, 2026.

AFP

misled by the United States' invading military.

The IRGC blamed the US's "hegemonic regime" for encouraging vessels to pass through an illegal, mined passage, saying Washington's insistence on that approach had led to a growing number of maritime incidents.

The US and Israel launched strikes against Iran on February 28, prompting Tehran to respond with retaliatory missile and drone attacks across the region

and immediately close the Strait of Hormuz, a key chokepoint for global energy supplies.

The waterway has remained closed and under the control of Iranian forces. Tehran has maintained that the strait will only be reopened if Washington meets its conditions, including lifting sanctions and ending the US naval blockade.

But the US military has been escorting vessels through the waterway in increasing numbers, with Iran responding by stepping up attacks.

Araghchi condemns 'parasitic' military relations between US, Israel

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi condemned "parasitic" military relations between the United States and Israel, citing the spending of \$11 billion in American taxpayers' money on missiles for the regime over the past three years.

Araghchi in an X post on Friday said the US has fired more interceptors to protect Israel than the usurping entity has.

"That is not a symbiotic relationship. It is a parasitic one," he added.

He also attached to his post a table provided on social media by independent policy analyst Stephen Semler that showed the US had fired an estimated 609 ballistic missile interceptors to protect Israel against Iran's retaliatory strikes between October



Abbas Araghchi

2023 and September 2026.

The figure, however, did not include the interceptors the US fired to protect its own military assets across West Asia in the face of Iran's reprisal attacks.

Earlier, Semler had estimated that the US had fired approximately 1,800 Patriot missiles between February and September this year.

Estimates indicate that the illegal aggression against Iran has consumed

up to 82 percent of pre-war US THAAD stockpiles and 61 percent of Patriot missile supplies.

Experts warn that the shrinking stockpile leaves the US vulnerable, noting that it would take years to replace the missiles used at the current build rate of 600 per year.

The US and the Israeli regime waged their first illegal war against Iran, which lasted 12 days, in June 2025. Their second aggression began on February 28, 2026, and came to a halt in early April after 40 days.

In both wars, Iran's retaliatory operations forced the aggressors to accept a ceasefire.

Iran has also maintained a tight grip on the Strait of Hormuz since the early days of the second imposed war amid the US's acts of mischief in the region.

Netanyahu warns of major West Bank military operation after attack kills Israeli soldiers

International Desk

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened a military operation in the occupied West Bank on a scale unseen in decades after Palestinian fighters killed two Israeli soldiers on Friday in an attack near Al-Khalil days before Israel's general elections.

A first step would see residents displaced, homes searched and infrastructure destroyed, said the premier, who is in the midst of a tight race for a new term in Tuesday's vote.

Defense Minister Israel Katz said the military would apply a model previously used in refugee camps in the northern West Bank, scene of a large-scale operation launched in January 2025 that the UN said forcibly displaced thousands.

Hamas' resistance group praised the attack as a "heroic operation" and called on supporters to carry out more.

The Gaza-based group called the attack a "natural and

legitimate response to the ongoing crimes and brutal attacks against our people". Three Israelis were also wounded in the attack before the gunmen were shot dead, officials said. It happened at a military checkpoint at the entrance to the city of Al-Khalil.

Netanyahu said he had ordered the military to prepare for a full lockdown of the West Bank, beginning later on Friday.

The attack comes at a time of high tensions, with extremist Jewish settlers targeting Palestinians during the annual olive harvest, and Israel's general election taking place in four days time.

Unverified CCTV footage shows two gunmen exit a car armed with what appears to be a handgun and an assault rifle and start firing on soldiers at the checkpoint, before coming under return fire.

The attack has already begun to influence the ongoing election campaign, with Netanyahu - who has built his campaign on the promise



Israeli army soldiers walk at the scene following a fire exchange with armed Palestinians at the northern checkpoint of Al-Khalil in the occupied West Bank on October 23, 2026.

AFP

of security - saying that his Likud party would cancel campaign events which had been set for Friday morning. He also visited the site of the attack on Friday afternoon, saying Israel is ready for "extensive action" in the West Bank.

His far-right coalition partner Bezalel Smotrich called for Israel to launch a campaign in the West Bank "exactly like in Gaza or Lebanon," while far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir called for Israel to dismantle the Palestinian Authority.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



CBI has curbed sharp acceleration in inflation, governor says

Economy Desk

Iran's inflation surge eased in the three months to September after accelerating sharply following a 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February, Central Bank Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said, citing the recovery of damaged industrial facilities and monetary measures to curb inflation expectations.

Hemmati said in a post on his Telegram channel that he discussed Iran's economic situation in a televised interview with Bloomberg last week on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in Bangkok, Thailand. He attributed the sharp acceleration in inflation during the spring to two main factors: damage to infrastructure and industrial facilities, which triggered a supply shock, and rising inflation expectations on the demand side. Some damaged industrial facilities have returned to production, while the central bank has partly

contained inflation expectations through monetary policy tools, Hemmati said.

He also said the United States had sought to bring about Iran's economic collapse within two weeks by intensifying economic pressure and tightening the blockade. Despite the heavy economic burden on the population, Washington had failed to achieve its main objective, he said.

Hemmati had made similar remarks in an address to central bank governors from the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, IRNA reported.

Iran's annual producer inflation rate rose to 92.3% in the sixth month of the Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, while year-on-year producer inflation climbed to 117.3%. Monthly producer price inflation also accelerated for a third consecutive month, reaching 4.9%, according to the Central Bank of Iran's latest report.

The rial has also fallen to record lows amid mounting economic

pressure, trading at more than 2.7 million rials per US dollar on the open market in recent weeks.

The sharp depreciation has underscored growing strain on an economy already grappling with high inflation and Western sanctions. Since late February, when a US-Israeli coalition launched a 40-day war, Iran has been operating under wartime conditions and facing a maritime blockade from the south. The blockade aims to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero and deplete government revenues.

Non-oil revenues to help cover budget deficit

Addressing concerns about declining oil revenues, Hemmati said oil income accounted for no major share of the government budget. The government planned to cover its budget deficit through other sources, including asset sales, energy-sector reforms and exports of petroleum products.

He added that Iran was still receiving foreign currency from oil exports and had made



arrangements to maintain those receipts.

Hemmati described the central bank's reserves as being in good condition and said they would be

sufficient to finance the country's imports through the end of US President Donald Trump's term on January 20, 2029, and beyond. To help offset the loss of

household purchasing power, he also emphasized the continuation of electronic purchase vouchers and gradual increases in their rial value for low-income households.

Deputy minister: Steel production capacity tops 55m tons

Economy Desk

Iran's annual steel production capacity has reached 55 million metric tons and could rise to 60 million tons within two years if infrastructure constraints are addressed and new technologies are adopted, a deputy industry minister said. Vajihollah Jafari made the remarks on Thursday at the opening of the 23rd Tabriz Metafou International Exhibition, IRNA reported.

"Capacity is expected to reach 60 million tons within the next two years, but to increase utilization of existing capacity and compete in global markets, infrastructure constraints must be addressed and new technologies adopted," he said. Jafari cited shortages of energy and natural gas, along with maintenance issues at some facilities, as factors limiting capacity utilization.

"Alongside maximizing the use of existing capacity, we must also plan to strengthen the competitiveness of the country's steel industry in the future," he said. He said the global steel industry was moving toward reducing waste, achieving zero waste and producing green steel. Without



the ability to compete in these areas, domestic production capacity alone would not meet development needs, while opportunities to compete effectively with global producers and expand exports would remain limited. Jafari said adopting new technologies and expanding industrial cooperation were essential to improving competitiveness. Exhibitions such as Tabriz Metafou could help the industry gain exposure to new technologies and advance its development, he added.

The country, long among the world's top 10 crude steel producers, dropped out of the ranking in June, with Vietnam entering the list in 10th place after increasing its June output by 27.5% year over year to 2.6 million metric tons, according to the World Steel Association.

Iran's two largest steel-makers, Mobarakeh

Steel Company and Khuzestan Steel Company, sustained damage during the 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February.

The conflict has disrupted steel production and exports through damage to industrial facilities, logistical constraints and energy shortages. Iran's aviation sector has also faced new US sanctions, while maritime trade from the south has been subject to a US naval blockade.

Bahram Sobhani, head of the Iranian Steel Producers Association, recently told IRIB that Iran's steel production was expected to reach 26 million to 27 million metric tons by the end of the current Iranian year on March 20, 2027, below an earlier forecast of 30 million tons. He cited the naval blockade, war-related damage and transportation restrictions as factors disrupting production and exports.

Iran, Turkey ease truck restrictions as Tehran expands rail transit capacity

Economy Desk

Iran and Turkey have agreed to accept trucks at border crossings around the clock, seven days a week, without time or numerical limits, as Iran seeks to expand its land transit capacity amid a US naval blockade affecting maritime trade from its southern coast.

The agreement was reached at a meeting between customs officials at Iran's Razi crossing and Turkey's Kapikoy crossing to facilitate the uninterrupted and efficient movement of export and transit shipments, Iran's customs administration said, according to Mehr news agency.

Under the agreement, trucks



will be accepted 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without restrictions on operating days or hours. There will also be no limit on the number of export trucks accepted at the border crossings.

The two sides also agreed not to impose restrictions on the types of goods transported, except for prohibited items, while giving priority

to essential food products and factory raw materials, the report said.

Separately, Jabar Ali Zakari, head of Iran's railway company, said on Thursday that the process of obtaining permits had reached its final stages and negotiations were advancing to attract Turkish investment in the Khavaran-Tabriz-Marand-Cheshmeh

Soraya railway project.

The project would increase East Azarbaijan province's share of Iran's rail network and strengthen the country's transit capacity along the east-west corridor, Zakari said.

He added that work had begun at the Razi border railway station to expand track and platform capacity, allowing more freight trains to arrive from Turkey and trains to depart from Tabriz for the neighboring country. The project will add about two kilometers to the station's track capacity and is expected to become operational within 20 days to one month, subject to completion of the remaining work, he said.

TENDER NO.: 08-21-0440060

Second Announcement



NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OIL COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

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

Item	Material Description	Quantity
1	CASING, API GRADE L-80, SEAMLESS "VAM", N.VAM, THREAD, RANGE 3, (MAX LEN: 40.5 FT), MARKING: COLD DIE STAMPED IN ACCORDANCE SIZE (OD), WEIGHT (PPF), AS SPECIFIED NOTE: LEVEL OF INSPECTION: 1 (L.O.I:1) "QCP/MPS DOCUMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO REVIEW & CONFIRM" "ITP DOCUMENTS IS ESSENTIAL FOR TECHNICAL EVALUATION" REF. VALLOUREC MANNESMANN OIL & GAS, 9-5/8 IN., 53.5 PPF, SPECIAL DRIFT: 8 IN. NIPPLES, CROSSOVER SUB, CASING, API GRADE L-80 SEAMLESS, ACCORDING TO API SCT SIZE (OD), WEIGHT (PPF), THREAD AS SPECIFIED REF. NIOC OR NISOC APPROVED VENDOR LIST 9-5/8 IN., 53.5 PPF, VAM TOP PIN X 9-5 NEW VAM BOX, 8-1/2 IN., DRIFT, PSL:2	5,000LE
2	9-5/8 IN., 53.5 PPF, NEW VAM PIN X 9-5 VAM TOP BOX, 8-1/2 IN., DRIFT, PSL:2	100NO
3	9-5/8 IN., 53.5 PPF, NEW VAM PIN X 9-5 VAM TOP BOX, 8-1/2 IN., DRIFT, PSL:2	100NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 85,587/24 EURO or 161,243,275.547 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

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

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex, Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran

Tel. No.: 061 34 12 4644
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By Sarah Yerkes
Acting co-director
of the Middle East
Program at the
CEIP

OPINION

The term “soft power,” which entered public discourse in the wake of the Cold War, refers to the power that flows from intangible things such as the culture, values, and moral authority of a country, in contrast to its “hard power,” which is based in its military and economic resources. Soft power is not coercive: it entices others to do what a country wants them to do — to follow its lead in foreign policy, to join its coalitions, and to adopt its ideology — because they find its values, reputation, and strength compelling and want to emulate these. Soft power on its own is insufficient to meet US national security needs, but hard power also has its limits, as the current war against Iran demonstrates. Soft power allows for more effective and efficient use of hard power than hard power alone as it encourages cooperation and compliance which deters the need for hard power.

Most indicators demonstrate that American soft power has declined since the start of the second Donald Trump administration. Yet, it has been under threat many times in the past and it has always (mostly) recovered. What is unique about this administration, however, is that it is unintentionally and intentionally destroying traditional sources and instruments of American soft power, doing damage that may not be repaired for decades.

What is soft power?

In the 1990s, the term “soft power” was popularized by Joseph Nye, who framed it as a form of power operating through attraction whereas hard power operates through coercion. This was in response to the Cold War-era argument that America was in decline. Nye argued that decline is overlooked what he called “co-optive or soft power,” a key form of power that prompted other countries to willingly support or accept US goals with little or no coercion. Nye first kept the definition rather broad, first defining it simply as “getting others to want what you want.”

He expanded the definition after 9/11, identifying culture, political values, and policies on international issues as the primary ingredients of soft power. John Ikenberry has pointed out that legitimacy is also an important component. It can be difficult to identify the exact impact that soft power has on the world, particularly in specific instances, just as it can be difficult to identify the exact impact of a company’s reputation on consumers’ interest in its products. Yet, as in the latter case, it is hard to believe that soft power has no impact.

Regardless of their nature, different actors, and not only states, rely on soft power to achieve their goals. Terrorist groups, for example, depend heavily on it for recruitment and for legitimacy within their own communities. And state and nonstate actors rarely wield it on its own. Rather, the most effective use of power combines hard and soft power, with one amplifying the other. Nye refers to this as “smart power.” Despite critical views, the concept is therefore valuable in policy analysis.

Evolution of American soft power

Perhaps the best-known con-

ception of American soft power flows from the idea of America as a “city on a hill” — a country inherently attractive to people of other nations, who hope to share in the “American dream.” The idea reflects the conception that America’s values like freedom, equal opportunity, innovation, and capitalism are not only crucial to its fabric but also attract people worldwide, thus generating soft power. Originally formulated by John Winthrop in 1630, the idea of America as a “city on a hill” resonated globally in the 1950s and 1960s, with the country experiencing an economic boom with rising prosperity and consumerism. This drew a wave of mass immigration to America beginning in 1965 — one indicator of soft power — but its “global ideological appeal” diminished during the era of civil rights contestation, when the country’s hypocrisy was revealed and its championing freedom and equality abroad contrasted sharply with its domestic reality. Later, as socioeconomic inequality grew in the 1990s and early 2000s, with certain parts of the population left behind, particularly people of color and immigrant populations, the American economic model also came into question.

Over the past 25 years, other US actions have taken some of the shine off the “city on a hill.” Most notably, as Nye explained, the response to 9/11, and the decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003 greatly reduced the international trust in and the legitimacy of America. Survey data shows that US credibility collapsed in dozens of countries directly after the invasion of Iraq. According to the Pew Research Center, the favorability rating of the United States dropped from 75 percent in the summer of 2002 to 48 percent in March 2003 (immediately after the invasion) in Great Britain, from 70 to 34 percent in Italy, from 61 to 25 percent in Germany, from 63 to 31 percent in France, and from 61 to 28 percent in Russia.

The controversies around the treatment of prisoners at the Guantánamo Bay detention center and Abu Ghraib prison complex in 2004–2006 also caused significant reputational damage to the United States as a human rights defender. The country’s allies and partners, as well as international human rights organizations and domestic commentators, spoke out against the reported torture of detainees at the hands of the US military. Amnesty International called Guantánamo the “gulag of our times” and a UN committee found in 2006 that America’s use of indefinite detention violated the 1984 Convention Against Torture. In a 2006 meeting with then president George W. Bush, Germany’s chancellor Angela Merkel called for the closure of Guantánamo. Editorial pages around the world condemned the United States. For example, The Guardian called Guantánamo a “indelible stain” on the United States. And others pointed out the administration’s hypocrisy. France’s Le Monde stated: “President Bush’s loss of prestige is also serious:



The illustration shows US President Donald Trump (C), Russian President Vladimir Putin (2nd-L), Chinese President Xi Jinping (3rd-L) and Hungarian former prime minister Viktor Orban.
● MARK HARRIS/FOREIGN POLICY

an administration wanting to give lessons is now hoisted by its own petard.” In 2008, the Senate Armed Services Committee concluded that detainee abuse “compromised [America’s] moral authority,” showing that the reputational damage was understood at home as well as abroad.

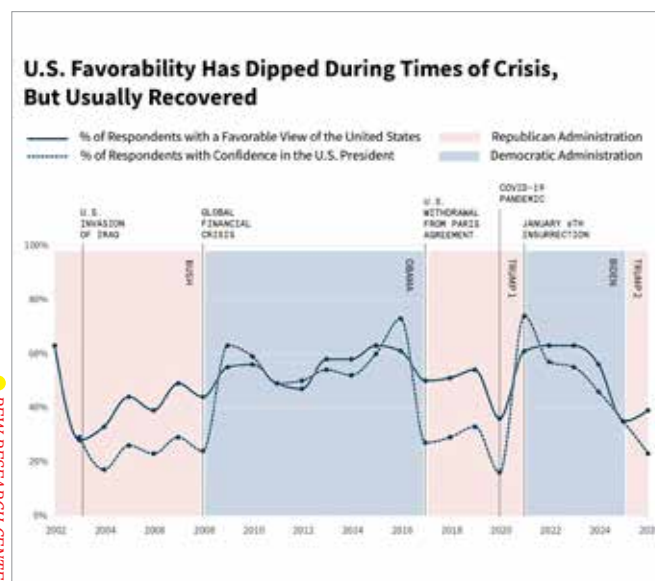
Meanwhile, perceptions of incompetence related to responses to domestic natural disasters, particularly after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, chipped away at the idea that America could take care of its domestic problems. Foreign media explicitly framed Katrina as exposing the country’s weakness. The Russian press compared the handling of the hurricane to the Kremlin’s widely criticized mismanagement of the 2000 Kursk submarine disaster. America’s reputation was further eroded by the Wikileaks release of around 250,000 diplomatic cables in 2010, which made public candid and at times unflattering US assessments of foreign leaders, and by the revelations by Edward Snowden in 2013 of the National Security Agency’s surveillance activities at home and abroad, including in allied countries. Furthermore, America’s refusal to ratify international treaties it had signed, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, or to sign the Mine Ban Treaty, worsened the perceptions of its

commitment to democratic values and human rights.

The ups and downs of American soft power can be measured through the United States’ global favorability ratings, which are a good proxy for the attractiveness of the country, on which its soft power ultimately depends (see figure 1). In the 2002 Pew Global Attitudes survey, an average of 63 percent in the countries surveyed said they had a favorable view of the United States; in 2004, this stood at 33 percent. During former president Barack Obama’s administration, the country’s average favorability score rebounded, reaching 55 percent in 2009 and peaking at 63 percent in 2015. In 2020, as the first Trump administration was drawing to a close, America’s score had fallen back to 36 percent. In 2021, during the first year of the Biden administration, it had risen again, up to 61 percent. And in 2025, when Trump took office for the second time, it fell down again, to 35 percent.

The first Trump administration

The first administration of President Donald Trump deprioritized soft power under its America First agenda. For example, in 2017, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Mick Mulvaney, stated when presenting the administration’s first budget: “It is not a soft-power budget. This is a hard-power budget, and



The administration also took several actions that directly contradicted the US values that defined the “city on a hill”. This included Executive Order 13769 that banned people from several Muslim-majority countries from entry into the United States, family separation policies at US borders, and cuts to refugee resettlement targets. At home, Trump’s attacks on the media, challenges to judicial independence, and the handling of anti-Trump protests, led the World Press Freedom Index to drop the rating of the United States to its lowest level in history and the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index to downgrade the country from a “full democracy” to a “flawed democracy”.

that was done intentionally. The president very clearly wants to send a message to our allies and to our potential adversaries that this is a strong-power administration.” The administration withdrew from key multilateral agreements that had been championed by previous administrations, including the Paris Climate Agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran, and it verbally attacked NATO allies and international institutions in a way that hurt the credibility of US commitments globally and, with that, US soft power.

The administration also took several actions that directly contradicted the US values that defined the “city on a hill”. This included Executive Order 13769 that banned people from several Muslim-majority countries from entry into the United States, family separation policies at US borders, and cuts to refugee resettlement targets. These made clear the approach to immigration had shifted dramatically. Given the countries it targeted, Executive Order 13769 also complicated cooperation with several partners in the Middle East, including in the ongoing war against the Daesh (Islamic State). At home, Trump’s attacks on the media, challenges to judicial independence, and the handling of anti-Trump protests, led the World Press Freedom Index to drop the rating of the United States to its lowest level in history and the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index to downgrade the country from a “full democracy” to a “flawed democracy”.

Some components of US soft power — such as cultural influence, educational appeal, sports, and public diplomacy — did not diminish significantly during the first Trump administration. The United States continued to dominate at the Olympics and in exports of creative services and maintained its share of creative goods. International students and tourists continued to be drawn to the United States at similar levels as during the Obama administration, with the notable exception of the pandemic years, which was unrelated to soft power projection. But other indices showed the damage many of Trump’s policies were doing. In the 2021 Global Soft Power Index, for example, the United States fell from first to sixth place as a result of the “turbulent” 2020 presidential election and the “incompetent” response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first Trump administration demonstrated the limits of purely coercive power in its extensive use of sanctions, military, and other threats in different contexts, and at the same time, it showed that American soft power at that point was not enough to draw other countries on board in the pursuit of some of its goals. Examples of the latter included Europe’s efforts to circumvent Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA by developing a special payment mechanism, the fact that few nations followed

its campaign against the World Health Organization, and the weak support for his efforts to remove president Nicolás Maduro from power in Venezuela.

The Biden administration
President Joe Biden came into office intending to rebuild American soft power, with the slogan “America is Back”. After the experience of the first Trump administration, his administration sought to repair longtime alliances and to reassure partners that Washington would be reliable and engaged on the global stage once more. In a reversal of Trump decisions, the United States rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization, and it restored funding to UN agencies. The Biden administration pursued vaccine diplomacy in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, delivering over 693 million doses of vaccines to developing countries in partnership with COVAX and other global organizations, and waiving intellectual property protections as a way to counter China’s own vaccine diplomacy. The administration took other steps aimed at countering a perceived increase in Chinese soft power, including joining with its G7 partners to launch the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment to compete with China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Such efforts in part aimed at restoring a measure of the soft power that the Biden administration believed had been squandered by the first Trump administration. During Biden’s election bid, his campaign had issued “The Biden Plan for Leading the Democratic World to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century”. In his opening remarks at the first Summit for Democracy, he declared: “The United States is going to lead by example, investing in our own democratic — in our democracy, supporting our partners around the world at the same time.” At the same time, though, the Biden administration took a few very high-profile actions that diminished the United States’ credibility and hurt its soft power, such as the chaotic 2021 Afghanistan withdrawal and the support for Israel in the Gaza war. Additionally, domestic issues including continued political polarization and gun violence further hurt the attractiveness of the American model.

The second Trump administration
The second Trump administration has not rejected the need for soft power; rather, it frames and wields soft power differently than past ones have. The 2025 National Security Strategy states: “We want to maintain the United States’ unrivaled ‘soft power’ through which we exercise positive influence throughout the world that furthers our interests. In doing so, we will be unapologetic about our country’s past and present while respectful of other countries’ differing religions, cultures, and governing systems. ‘Soft power’ that serves America’s true national interest is effective only if we believe in our country’s inherent greatness and decency.” Further, in describing the country’s “world-leading assets, resources and advantages,” the National Security Strategy mentions its “unmatched ‘soft power’ and cultural influence”. However, who it seeks to attract is at odds with the traditional US soft power projection around the values of democracy, equality, and human rights. The fact that the Trump administration em-

braces autocrats is not unique in American history, but that it does so openly and without reservation is new. And the reason Trump sometimes does so is also new, with the pursuit of financial benefit to himself, his personal business, and his family circle. The Trump administration has also overtly attempted to influence election outcomes in Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Hungary, Honduras, Canada, Japan, Australia, Romania, Poland, France, and the United Kingdom by publicly endorsing some candidates and attacking others, or by conditioning aid on certain electoral outcomes. While the United States has a long history of interfering in foreign elections, particularly through covert CIA operations during the Cold War, it had shifted toward overt and ostensibly nonpartisan democracy assistance and avoided public endorsement of specific candidates since the 1980s. The administration has departed from this by openly endorsing candidates and parties, particularly illiberal and far-right ones, including by publicly sending senior officials such as Vice President JD Vance or former Homeland Security secretary Kristi Noem for meetings. This undermines the United States’ credibility around the world as a democracy supporter, not least with its traditional democratic allies and partners. In those cases where it wishes to do so, this also diminishes the administration’s ability to influence in a pro-democracy direction autocratic and illiberal governments, which can refer to its hypocrisy when failing to follow democratic values at home and to advance them in some countries. Some analysts have argued, based on polling results, that one consequence of the Trump administration’s America First foreign policy is that it is boosting the global impression of China as increasingly powerful and “driving people closer to China”. In this view, Trump’s rejection of liberal democratic values also gives other actors “license to build stronger links to Beijing”. If that is correct, then one side effect of the administration’s diminution or reframing of American soft power is to help increase China’s relative attractiveness as partner. The administration has also intentionally diminished or destroyed key institutions on which American soft power rested, such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Institute of Peace, and Voice of America. The United States’ soft power has been boosted for decades by its international humanitarian and other activities that have aimed to win “hearts and minds” around the world. The Trump administration, however, has dismantled USAID, instituted hiring freezes in other foreign assistance institutions, and sought to close the Voice of America. The Trump administration’s actions on immigration have also had effects that are closely related to soft power. Limiting foreigners’ access to the United States has indirect consequences for its soft power. Openness to immigration has been not only a direct benefit to its economy and culture, it has also been a key part in the “city on a hill” idea. The United States’ power of attraction around the world is diminished by the shutting out foreigners — including scientists, doctors, and other experts — or by disqualifying them from remaining in the country and sometimes deporting them outright. The violent law-enforcement crackdowns on



The huge screens at the UN General Assembly show which countries voted overwhelmingly for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza in December 2023, in defiance of the United States, which had blocked so many UNSC bids to hold Israel accountable for its war crimes.
● ANGELA WEISS/AFP

migrants and on US citizens engaged in opposing protests compounds the problem. Insofar as soft power flows from the credibility of a country’s commitments, the legitimacy of its foreign policy, and the trustworthiness of its leaders, the Trump administration has also eroded that of the United States. For example, its indiscriminate and punitive use of tariffs, threats to annex Greenland and suggestion of taking back the Panama Canal have damaged American trustworthiness. As Keren Yarhi-Milo has argued, Trump has not only undermined American credibility to a greater extent than any past president has, he has done so deliberately by seeking to be unpredictable. The result, as Francis Fukuyama wrote, is that there “has never been a time when the United States was more distrusted, by both traditional friends and by rivals, as at the present”. European analysts have argued that Trump’s volatility has threatened the global impression of China as increasingly powerful and “driving people closer to China”. In this view, Trump’s rejection of liberal democratic values also gives other actors “license to build stronger links to Beijing”. If that is correct, then one side effect of the administration’s diminution or reframing of American soft power is to help increase China’s relative attractiveness as partner. The administration has also intentionally diminished or destroyed key institutions on which American soft power rested, such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Institute of Peace, and Voice of America. The United States’ soft power has been boosted for decades by its international humanitarian and other activities that have aimed to win “hearts and minds” around the world. The Trump administration, however, has dismantled USAID, instituted hiring freezes in other foreign assistance institutions, and sought to close the Voice of America. The Trump administration’s actions on immigration have also had effects that are closely related to soft power. Limiting foreigners’ access to the United States has indirect consequences for its soft power. Openness to immigration has been not only a direct benefit to its economy and culture, it has also been a key part in the “city on a hill” idea. The United States’ power of attraction around the world is diminished by the shutting out foreigners — including scientists, doctors, and other experts — or by disqualifying them from remaining in the country and sometimes deporting them outright. The violent law-enforcement crackdowns on

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soft power to serve his financial self-interest. Trump’s brand is perhaps best symbolized by the phrase “Make America Great Again,” as displayed on his iconic red cap, which he often gifts to foreign leaders, and by the acronym MAGA. Some savvy leaders have spun the brand around on Trump. Colombia’s President Gustavo Petro, during his visit to the White House in February 2026, added an “s” to his gifted hat and told Trump he hoped they could make “Americas” great again. Where Trump conducts diplomatic business also promotes his brand and can be seen as an attempt to project his personal soft power. While he holds some official meetings in the Oval Office, he has made more use of his personally branded venues such as hotels (including the Trump International Hotel in DC his first term) and golf clubs as well as his Mar-a-Lago private club in Florida. Weinstein has argued that, “by tying diplomacy to the president’s personal brand — as if it belongs to one person or administration — the US erodes its long-term credibility and undermines the very diplomats charged with carrying it out.” One possible consequence for American soft power of this personalized approach is that it can make leaders of rival powers seem more trustworthy by comparison as global views of Trump become more negative. According to Pew data, in 2023, the median level of confidence in 20 countries — including close US allies like Germany and the United Kingdom — that Biden would “do the right thing regarding world affairs” was 54 percent, compared to only 19 percent for Xi, whereas in 2026 confidence in Trump is at 21 percent and in Xi at 31 percent. However, given the idiosyncratic nature of Trump as a political figure and of his approach to the presidency, it would be nearly impossible for the next administration — whether Democratic or Republican — to carry on an approach to soft power that is

situated so clearly in his person.

What comes next?
There is a temporal difference when it comes to the destruction and rebuilding of soft power. The dimensions of soft power that the Trump administration has damaged are easier to erode than to rebuild. We therefore may not know the extent of damage to US soft power until well beyond the end of the administration, making it difficult to repair. On the other hand, unlike hard power resources, whose decrease can be clearly observed when used, the sources of soft power are more diffuse and many of them are difficult to use up or to destroy. For example, while many around the world were shocked by the images of the Capitol under attack on January 6, 2021, there was no clear and measurable decline in soft power. If soft power decline were happening, we might expect to see a drop in Hollywood box office receipts, foreign students unenrolling from US universities, or a decrease in demand for US foreign assistance, but there is no data to support that this occurred. What is more, foreign public perceptions of a country change slowly, and, similarly, soft power increases or decreases slowly. Just as it may have taken generations for foreign audiences to develop the admiration and respect that brings the United States soft power, this soft power may linger for years after the seeds of its decline have been sowed. American soft power has declined before and, in most cases, recovered. As Nye wrote in 2021, the United States suffered far greater threats to its soft power during the 1960s than during the first Trump administration, including the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, the Vietnam War, and bombings of university and government buildings. Yet, these developments also pushed US political figures to “restore our attractiveness,” which arguably increased the country’s soft power in the long term. The United States’ attractiveness had been taken for granted by many political leaders, and it was not until it was threatened that they realized the need for action to restore it. However, the fact that American soft power recovered from harm in the past does not mean it will do so this time. There are several important long-term implications of the decline of American soft power through the actions of the second Trump administration. First, it is creating a vacuum that other powers can take advantage of and try to fill. For example, in Russia, state-run outlets regularly blame the United States and its democratic dysfunction for domestic social problems at home and hold up the Vladimir Putin regime as a counterexample of stability. As its attractiveness and legitimacy erode, and thus its soft power declines, the United States will likely need to compensate for that if it wants to achieve some goals in ways — such as financial inducement, sanctions, or force — that are costlier than the consent-generating ones of soft power. A foreign policy that leans more heavily on coercive and hard power rather than soft power will also risk greater and more hostile blowback. This is an expensive and potentially dangerous path forward for the United States.



A man burns a US flag during a protest against the tariffs on Brazilian products imposed by US President Donald Trump, in Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil, on July 29, 2025.
● ROOSEVELT CASSIO/REUTERS

The full article was first published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games:

Iran retains sitting volleyball dominance, wins triple gold in athletics

Sports Desk

Iran's men's sitting volleyball team defeated Kazakhstan in straight sets (25-17, 25-15, 25-17) in Friday's final to win gold at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Para Games, securing the title for the fifth consecutive time since the multi-sport event was first held in 2010. Iranians also enjoyed success elsewhere on the penultimate day of competition, collecting a host of medals, including three golds, in para athletics. There was an all-Iranian one-two in the men's F34 shot put, as world record holder Mehran Nekouei-majd claimed gold with a throw of 11.9 meters on his fourth attempt, while compatriot Mohammad-Taha Beygrezaei settled for silver with 11.61m. Mahdi Olad, who had won silver in the shot put earlier in the Games, posted a season-best 40.65m to claim gold in the men's F11 discus throw. The event was dominated by

Iranians, with Hassan Bajoulvand and Amirhossein Alipour taking silver and bronze, respectively. Elham Salehi spearheaded Iran's medal hunt in women's para athletics on Friday, winning gold in the F54/F53 shot put. Salehi, who had also won gold in the javelin throw on Monday, registered 6.79m to beat compatriot Shahla Hadidi, who finished second with 5.86m. Elsewhere at Paloma Mizuho Stadium, Hanan Kaab Omeir in the women's discus throw and Hormoz Seidi in the men's javelin throw won silver medals in their respective classes, while Farzaneh Sohrabi Tabar in the women's discus throw and Fatemeh Amirzadegani in the women's long jump added two bronze medals to Iran's para athletics haul.

In men's blind football, Hossein Rajabpour and Morteza Karimi scored within three



● JSNA

minutes of each other in the first half as Iran came from behind to beat Thailand 2-1

in the bronze-medal match. Iran also claimed bronze in para archery, with Somayeh

and Gholamreza Rahimi teaming up to beat India's pair 5-4 in the mixed recurve team

bronze-medal match. Abolfazl Zarifpour, meanwhile, took Iran's medal tally in para swimming to 13 by winning bronze in the men's 100m free-style S9 final. Friday's achievements followed another medal-laden day for Iran across several sports, with the delegation collecting five golds on Thursday. Sina Zeighaminejad claimed two swimming titles in the men's events, while Hajar Safarzadeh clocked 56.43 seconds to win gold in the women's 400m T12, breaking the Asian Para Games record in the process. Two-time Paralympic champion Saeid Afrooz also set a world record of 42.58m to claim gold in the men's F33/F34 javelin throw. In para powerlifting, reigning Paralympic champion Ahmad Aminzadeh won the men's +107kg title with a lift of 260kg, finishing 20kg ahead of Iranian silver medalist Mahdi Sayyadi.

Wrestling World Championships: New superheavyweight era in Greco-Roman as Hedayati makes debut

Sports Desk

For two decades, the Greco-Roman 130kg gold medal at the World Championships and Olympic Games has largely been contested by legendary Cuban Mijain López and Turkish great Riza Kayaalp, who have collected 14 titles between them across 24 major events. Iran's Amin Mirzazadeh has been the only wrestler to break their duopoly twice, winning world titles in 2023 and 2025. But a new force is ready to challenge the established order: Mirzazadeh's compatriot Fardin Hedayati. Having collected five

medal last year and returns in search of his second world title. China's Wenhao Jiang will also be a talent to watch after becoming his country's first U23 world champion in Greco-Roman wrestling last week in Las Vegas. Elsewhere, defending champion Mohammad-Hadi Saravi of Iran enters the competition as the man to beat at 97kg. The Paris Olympic champion reclaimed the world title in Zagreb last year, defeating Russia's Artur Sargsian in the final to secure his second world crown. Sargsian, who has now lost twice to Saravi, will be joined by returning bronze medalists Kiryl Maskevich of Belarus

Jafarov, a European champion with world and Olympic medals, will be determined to complete his collection with a senior world title. Cuba's Luis Orta, a former world champion, and Uzbekistan's Aytjan Khalmakhanov, who has moved up from 63kg, will also be in contention. Gholamreza Farokhi will return to the 82kg division after a difficult season at 87kg. Since winning the world title, the Iranian has struggled to replicate that success at senior level, missing out on gold at both the Asian Championships and the Asian Games. A return to his title-winning weight class offers an opportunity to regain his form and defend his crown.

Former world champion Akzhol Makhmudov of Kyrgyzstan will be among his leading rivals, alongside Asian champion Shahin Baddaghi of Qatar and European champion Gurban Gurbanov of Azerbaijan. Iran will also count on Ali Ahmadi Vafa at 60kg, where he will seek to make amends for missing out on a medal last year. At 63kg, Mohammad Keshtkar will aim to improve on his previous bronze medal as the division welcomes a new champion following Khalmakhanov's move to 67kg.

At 77kg, Asian champion Ali Oskou faces a difficult challenge against defending world champion Malkhas Amoyan of Armenia, while Danial Sohrabi will seek to upgrade the bronze medal he won at 72kg last year. Payam Ahmadi will also be looking to go one better at 55kg after taking silver in a thrilling final against Georgia's Vakhtang Lolua in 2025. The two young wrestlers will again be among the contenders, alongside Azerbaijan's experienced Eldaniz Azizli. With established champions seeking to defend their crowns and emerging talents eager to make their mark, defending team champion Iran will look to strengthen its position among the leading forces in Greco-Roman wrestling.



● JNAW

world and Asian age-group titles, the highly touted Iranian heavyweight, who defeated Mirzazadeh in the trials to secure his place on the national team, is ready for his World Championships debut as the global showpiece gets underway in Astana, Kazakhstan, today. With two years remaining before the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, gold in Astana would strengthen Hedayati's credentials as a serious contender for Olympic glory. However, he will face a tough challenge, as Kayaalp returns to the World Championships after a three-year absence, having claimed a record 13th European title in April. Another veteran in the mix is Russia's Sergei Semenov, who missed out on a

and Murad Ahmadiyev of Azerbaijan in challenging the Iranian. At 87kg, Iran's Alireza Mohmadi will return with unfinished business after narrowly missing out on his first senior world title last year. The Iranian Olympic silver medalist led Serbia's Aleksandr Komarov in the final before suffering a 4-3 defeat. Komarov will defend his crown, while Bulgaria's Olympic champion Semen Novikov is another major threat. Saeid Esmaeili, meanwhile, will aim to retain his world title at 67kg. The Iranian prodigy followed his Olympic triumph with world gold last year, defeating Azerbaijan's Hasrat Jafarov in the final. Their rivalry continued at the Islamic Solidarity Games, where Esmaeili again prevailed in the closing seconds.

Golmohammadi named Iran U23 coach

Sports Desk

Yahya Golmohammadi has been appointed head coach of Iran's U23 national team on a three-year contract, the Iranian Football Federation announced on Thursday.

Golmohammadi, 56, left his job at Duhok SC in the Iraqi top flight to take over from Hossein Abdi, who stepped down after his team suffered a group-stage exit at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan last month.

The former Iranian international center-back, who took charge of Duhok in June, led the club to two wins and six draws in 10 outings in the Iraq Stars League.

Golmohammadi enjoyed the most successful spell of his coaching career at Persepolis, guiding the Tehran Reds to three Persian Gulf Pro League titles and a domestic cup trophy, as well as the AFC Champions League final, during his four-year tenure. He parted ways with the capital club midway through the 2023-24 season following a falling-out with the club hierarchy.

He then took over at Foolad Khuzestan ahead of the 2024-25 campaign and led the southern Iranian side to an impressive fourth-place finish. However, a run of poor results saw him leave the club by mutual consent midway through the following season.

In his new role, Golmohammadi will be tasked with ending Iran's 52-year wait for a place in the Olympic football tournament. His team will compete in the next edition of the AFC U23 Asian Cup in Japan in January 2028, where the two finalists will secure qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olymp-

pics later that year. Golmohammadi's appointment is only the first step toward a new era for the U23 national team, but the main challenge is to build a cohesive and competitive side from a generation of players expected to carry the burden of Iranian football in the years to come. His experience managing major teams and working under the high-pressure conditions of Iranian football could prove valuable. However, success at the U23 level requires more than technical expertise; it also depends on careful planning, coordination with clubs and consistent access to talented players. Iran's U23 team has repeatedly struggled with preparations and securing the release of players during the club season in recent years. To achieve the ultimate goal, the new head coach must address these obstacles from the outset.



● khabarvarzeshi.com

Experts call for global geopark development in Lut Desert

Iranica Desk

A specialized meeting on the Lut Desert, part of a series of expert sessions on Kerman studies, was held at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman. Ibrahim Mohammadi, a faculty member at the Graduate University of Advanced Technology in Kerman, spoke at the meeting about the province's tourism potential. He noted that Kerman is home to 10 sites inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List and covers an area larger than the combined land area of 115 countries, according to ISNA. Pointing to the province's re-

markable diversity of natural, geological, historical, cultural, religious and spiritual attractions, Mohammadi said Kerman accounts for approximately 11 percent of Iran's total area but attracts only around 0.7 percent of the country's tourists. The paleontology PhD holder outlined the benefits of establishing a UNESCO Global Geopark in the Lut Desert. These include strengthening the desert's international standing and bringing its valuable heritage under a unified management framework; promoting sustainable geotourism; developing tourism, scientific and nature-based

routes; encouraging longer visitor stays; and showcasing the Lut's unique natural and geological features. He added that a geopark could boost the local economy and create jobs for tour guides, traditional accommodation providers, transport operators, handicraft producers and other local businesses. It could also expand research and education, facilitate geological and geomorphological studies, and encourage greater participation by local communities in protecting natural heritage and benefiting sustainably from tourism. Mohammadi emphasized that

the initiative would also help strengthen protection of the Lut Desert by linking key geosites through coordinated management and reducing damage caused by tourism and inappropriate exploitation. Other objectives include developing an integrated tourism destination, promoting the Shahdad Kaluts and other geological attractions through complementary routes and visitor experiences, enhancing Kerman's international profile, and raising awareness of the province's natural and geological assets. He further highlighted the potential for international scientific



● alibaba.ir

cooperation, sustainable regional development, environmentally responsible tourism, job creation and a more equitable distribution of tourism revenues among local communities. Achieving these goals, he said, would re-

quire science-based and participatory management, a comprehensive conservation and tourism plan, documentation of geosites, public education, and the involvement of relevant institutions and local residents.

Pomegranate Festival promotes investment, tourism development in Khalkhal

Iranica Desk

The third Nemahil Pomegranate Cultural and Tourism Festival was held in Khvoresh Rostam District, Khalkhal, Ardabil Province, on Thursday, attracting large numbers of tourists. The festival featured stalls selling orchard produce, handicrafts and local foods, alongside cultural and artistic performances.

tourism investors to explore opportunities in the region, highlighting the extensive potential of southern Ardabil Province, and added that government agencies would provide the necessary support to businesses and investors in the sector. Outlining the department's efforts to develop tourism across the province, Jabari noted that, alongside organizing festivals



● farsnews.ir

Jalil Jabari, Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Ardabil Province, said at the festival that Khvoresh Rostam District, located in the southern part of the province, has significant potential across various sectors. He said the pomegranate festival, held for the third consecutive year along the banks of the Ghezel Ozan River, aims to showcase these local assets and promote regional economic development. "In a region with unique tourism attractions, agricultural resources and handicrafts, we are working to connect these sectors and develop the tourism industry in order to improve local livelihoods and contribute to the development of the province," Jabari added. He stressed that by organizing such events, the provincial organization seeks not only to foster social vitality, showcase local potential and attract tourists, but also to strengthen cultural identity across the province, pass the experiences of previous generations on to future generations, revive traditions and promote national unity. Referring to tourism-related issues in Khalkhal, Jabari said they were being pursued in cooperation with the city's governor's office. He invited

and tourism events in different areas, the department had secured first place nationally in the public relations category, as well as first place in foreign tourism advertising and marketing. He said these achievements reflected the efforts of the department's staff to promote the province's tourism assets and support the growth of its tourism industry. The Nemahil Pomegranate Festival welcomed visitors with colorful stalls showcasing orchard produce, authentic handicrafts and local cuisine, attracting people who had traveled to the region to discover the remarkable potential of southern Ardabil Province. Khalkhal, with a population of approximately 90,000, is located in the south of Ardabil Province and is home to a wealth of historical, natural and agricultural attractions. Khvoresh Rostam District, with its favorable climate and fertile orchards, is one of the major pomegranate-producing hubs in Ardabil Province. More than 600 tons of high-quality pomegranates are produced in the area each year. Their superior quality and distinctive flavor set Khvoresh Rostam's pomegranates apart from those grown in other regions.

Iranica Desk

The registration of 32 historic, cultural and industrial sites in Masjed Soleyman Khuzestan Province, by Iran's National Heritage Registration Council marks a significant milestone in preserving the city's rich heritage and advancing efforts to secure UNESCO World Heritage recognition for its cultural and industrial landscape. Beyond protecting the city's valuable historic assets, the initiative could help highlight Iran's contribution to the development of the Middle East's oil industry and the social, architectural and urban transformations that followed. Mojtaba Gahestouni, a cultural heritage expert wrote in a note published by chtn.ir that during meetings of the National Heritage Registration Council held on October 20 and 21, 2026, at the Khuzestan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization in Ahvaz, 32 dossiers relating to historic, cultural and industrial sites in Masjed Soleyman were reviewed. The meetings were attended by a registration delegation from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. The dossiers, prepared and documented by the National Site for the Cultural and Industrial Landscape of Masjed Soleyman, were approved for final inclusion on Iran's National Heritage List. The achievement reflects the specialized work, sustained efforts and professional expertise of the national site, alongside cooperation from experts at the Masjed Soleyman Cultural Heritage Office and support and guidance from the provincial director-general and central office staff. These efforts have focused on identifying, documenting, protecting and promoting the enduring heritage of one of Iran's most important historic and industrial cities. The newly registered sites encompass a diverse range of industrial, architectural, social, educational, religious and infrastructure-related heritage. Together, they tell the story of the emergence and expansion of Iran's oil industry while reflecting far-reaching changes in lifestyles, architecture, public services and urban planning in the modern era. The significance of this collection extends beyond the historical value of individual buildings and sites. It is the connections between them that create a distinctive cul-

Masjed Soleyman's industrial heritage moves closer to global recognition

tural and industrial landscape. Masjed Soleyman's landscape comprises an interconnected network of oil installations, administrative and residential buildings, bridges, service centers, social spaces, religious buildings and historic sites. Collectively, these elements illustrate how the oil industry became part of everyday life and transformed Iran's urban and social structures. According to information pro-

vided by the National Site for the Cultural and Industrial Landscape of Masjed Soleyman, 136 heritage registration dossiers have so far been prepared to identify, document and protect the city's historic, cultural and industrial assets. This extensive body of work highlights the richness of Masjed Soleyman's heritage and the need for a comprehensive conservation strategy — one that treats national registration as a starting point and continues through effective protection, scientifically guided restoration, the management of protected areas, ongoing documentation and public outreach. Alongside this achievement, the prospect of including the Cultural and Industrial Landscape of Masjed Soleyman on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites represents an important opportunity for the city's cultural heritage. The national site has prepared a World Heritage nomination dossier for Masjed Soleyman and submitted it to UNESCO. The initiative could help bring the city's historical significance to wider international attention. But why is World Heritage recognition important for Masjed Soleyman, and why



should the effort not be postponed indefinitely? The answer lies in countries' growing efforts to identify, protect and promote their industrial heritage internationally. Industrial heritage is far more than a collection of factories, oil wells, pipelines and old buildings. It tells the story of major economic, technological, social and cultural changes that have shaped the modern world. Countries that present this his-



tory through credible historical evidence, effective conservation and rigorous research have a greater opportunity to establish their place in the international narrative of industrial development. Despite their different historical contexts and characteristics, these proposals raise an important issue for Iran. As countries across the region seek recognition for their industrial and urban heritage, delays in systematically presenting Masjed Soleyman's historical legacy could limit the international visibility of one of the Middle East's most significant centres in the history of oil. It is important, however, to distinguish between inclusion on UNESCO's Tentative List and final inscription on the

World Heritage List. Inclusion on the Tentative List does not constitute definitive world heritage recognition, nor does it, by itself, establish historical precedence or a country's exclusive ownership of a particular historical narrative. Nevertheless, the Tentative List is an official and important stage in identifying potential World Heritage nominations and can indicate which sites countries intend to prioritize for future consideration. The case for world heritage recognition for Masjed Soleyman, therefore, should not be viewed simply as competition with neighboring countries. The central issue is safeguarding Iran's historical contribution to the emergence of the oil industry and the transformations it brought about across the Middle East. Without a comprehensive nomination supported by credible documentation and comparative research, the international account of these developments could fail to adequately reflect Masjed Soleyman's role. The city's importance lies in the fact that its industrial sites cannot be understood separately from the social and urban context in which they developed. Oil installations, company bungalows, bridges, schools, healthcare centres, clubs and religious buildings together offer a multilayered picture of the emergence of an industrial city in Iran. The relationship between these industrial, architectural and social elements could form the basis of a cultural and industrial landscape nomination — one that looks beyond individual buildings to encompass the connections between historic sites, their surrounding environment, the history of labour and the life of the community. Accordingly, a world heritage nomination for Masjed Soleyman should present a well-documented and comprehensive account of these connections. In addition to explaining the city's historical role in the oil industry, it should address its architectural and urban-planning values, technological developments, social relations and the industry's impact on residents' lives.

Iran, Iraq to raise annual two-way tourism to 10m trips

Social Desk

Iran and Iraq aim to increase the combined number of annual tourist trips between the two countries to 10 million, up from about 7.2 million currently, Iran's tourism minister said on Wednesday. Reza Salehi-Amiri, Iran's minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, said that plans to expand land travel, improve border infrastructure and organize medical tourism, IRNA reported. "The proposal was raised during the Iraqi prime minister's visit to Tehran, the Iranian capital, and meeting with Iran's president. Salehi-Amiri said about 3.6 million Iraqi tourists visit Iran each year, while roughly the same number of Iranians travel to Iraq.

The figures exclude the annual Arbaeen pilgrimage. Arbaeen comes annually 40 days after the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (PBUH). He said the figure falls outside conventional tourism because of its spiritual and religious nature. Iran plans to focus on land travel amid limitations in air transportation, with efforts to improve cross-border movement in four provinces: Khuzestan and Ilam in western and southwestern Iran, Kermanshah in the west, and West Azerbaijan in the northwest. The government also aims to make it easier for families to travel between the two countries in private cars. Salehi-Amiri identified the Shalamchek border crossing in southwestern Iran as a key point for expanding land tourism. He said 10,000 to 15,000



A tourist wearing a traditional Arab robe stands outside an unnamed hotel in Mashhad, northeastern Iran, in an undated photo.

● ZAHRA AYANI/ISNA

Iraqi nationals enter Abadan, a city in southwestern Iran, each day. Some come for medical treatment, while others visit for different forms of tourism, he said. The minister also said the government had approved the charter for medical tourism and the formation of a medical tourism council to better coordinate the sector. Salehi-Amiri did not specify a timeline for reaching the 10 million-trip target. Achieving it will require new planning and improvements to border facilities and land connections, he said.



India's ambassador to Iran seeks to expand cultural ties



India's ambassador to Iran Vishwesh Negi

● IRNA

Social Desk

India's ambassador to Iran said strengthening cultural cooperation and people-to-people ties was a priority of his mission, citing the two countries' shared history, philosophical connections and long-standing relations. Vishwesh Negi told IRNA that Iran and India had deep historical ties and that closer links between their people could help broaden bilateral cooperation. He said the presence of many Iranians in India and Indians in Iran provided an opportunity to strengthen cultural exchanges. Negi also pointed to shared philosophical values, saying the principles associated

with Mahatma Gandhi, including truth, nonviolence and sacrifice, were consistent with values found in Iranian society. He described Iranians as peace-loving people. The ambassador has returned to Iran for a second posting, about 20 years after serving there as the Indian embassy's second secretary. He said Iranians held India in high regard and that their positive attitude toward the country could help advance bilateral relations. Negi said his responsibilities extended beyond cultural affairs to include trade, communications and political relations. During his first month back in Iran, he said, he had met with people active in cultural,

political and economic fields and had visited several regions of the country. His remarks highlighted the role of cultural and public engagement in relations between the two countries, alongside broader diplomatic and commercial ties. However, he did not outline specific new initiatives or agreements to expand cultural cooperation. Iran and India have a long history of cultural and intellectual interaction, and both countries have communities living in each other's territory. Negi's comments underscored the potential for these existing connections to support closer engagement across several areas of bilateral relations.

Iranian books on display at int'l fairs in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is showcasing more than 600 book titles at international book fairs in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital and Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan in Central Asia, IRNA reported on Thursday.

The 12th Baku International Book Fair opened on October 21 at the Baku Expo Center. Iran's Book and Literature House is displaying nearly 300 titles on Iranian studies, culture and civilization, classical literature, and books for children and young adults. As Iran seeks to promote its literature and expand regional publishing ties, the books are available in Persian, Turkish and English. Organizers said 32 countries were represented,



including 10 participating for the first time. The fair also features 59 foreign organizations and 148 domestic organizations. This year's slogan, "Life is bigger than a screen: One child, one book, one real world," highlights the importance of encouraging children to read. The program includes book launches, author meetings, literary sessions, book



Visitors browse books displayed at the Iran Book and Literature House booth during the 12th Baku International Book Fair in Baku, Azerbaijan, on October 21-25, 2026.

● IRNA

signings, workshops, conferences and activities for young visitors. Iranian books showcase at Dushanbe book fair Iran is also presenting

more than 300 titles at the 14th Dushanbe International Book Fair, running from October 22 to 24 at the National Museum of Tajikistan.

The collection covers classical and contemporary Iranian literature, Iranian studies, and books for children and young adults. On the sidelines, Mohsen Javadi, Iran's deputy culture minister for cultural affairs, met Latifa Abdulkhalizoda, head of Tajikistan's National Library. They discussed exchanging scientific resources, protecting written heritage and strengthening cooperation between libraries.

Iran's participation in both fairs aims to introduce Iranian writers to regional audiences and expand links among publishers and cultural institutions.

Swiss online exhibition features 34 Iranian artists

Arts & Culture Desk

Works by 34 Iranian artists are being presented in an online group exhibition in Switzerland, featuring visual arts and handicrafts. The exhibition, titled 'Sar Zamin' (Green Land), opened on October 22 and is available to view through October 26, ILNA reported. The event is organized by the Aytist Art Group, the Iran Creative Tourism Center and the Ro'ad Al-Tijara Al-Intaj

Al-Alami Institute. Aynaz Zarei, a painter and head of the Aytist Art Group, is curating the exhibition. The participating artists are presenting 34 works spanning visual arts and handicrafts. The exhibition brings together a range of artistic practices in an online format, allowing viewers to access the works without attending a physical venue. Organizers have directed art enthusiasts to the Aytist

Art Group's Instagram account, aynazzareii, and its Telegram channel, as well as the official website of the Ro'ad Al-Tijara Al-Intaj Al-Alami Institute, to view the exhibition. Online exhibitions offer a way to present artwork beyond a conventional gallery setting, although the reach of such events depends in part on their promotion and the accessibility of their digital platforms. The exhibition is part of an



effort by the organizers to present Iranian visual arts and handicrafts through a shared online showcase.