



Executive Summary

The defining development of the cycle is the entry of China as an active party. Where the 24-25 August batches answered the US 'economic D-Day' sanctions with a self-generated 'boomerang' narrative, this morning that narrative acquires a great-power mechanism: China formally protested the new US measures, its foreign-ministry spokesman calling them unilateral, and signaled that Chinese firms will continue to work with Iran. Vatan-e Emrooz runs the story as a single giant 'No' over a photograph of Trump and Xi; Etemad fronts 'Beijing's counterstrike'; Ta'adol headlines 'Beijing's warning to Washington'; Sobh-e No calls it 'China's red line' and Sazandegi 'opposition to America.' The convergence across hardline, reformist and business titles, corroborated by the wire agencies (Defa Press citing Bloomberg that Iran ties 'should not be disrupted,' Nour News citing the Independent on the limits of US leverage over China), marks the moment Tehran's press stopped arguing that the sanctions would fail on their own and started arguing that a great power will make them fail.

Running against that unified anti-sanctions front is the sharpest intra-system split of the war so far, and it is the edition's single highest-significance finding. The Pakistani mediation track that the government-reformist lane welcomed on 25 August has now openly fractured the system. Jomhuri Eslami fronts 'significant progress in Tehran-Washington talks under Pakistani mediation' and the English Iran Daily reports 'significant progress' on the 'Islamabad MoU'; Javan accepts the channel but hardens the terms to 'the memorandum only, and Washington must act first.' Kayhan's flagship 'Yadasht-e Rooz' editorial does the opposite: it brands the mediator Asim Munir 'an American operative' and the entire mediation a 'deception operation' designed to extract what the battlefield did not. The hardline flagship is no longer merely subordinating the diplomacy to the boomerang narrative, as on 25 August; it is actively working to discredit and derail it.

The Strait of Hormuz, which migrated on 25 August from a deterrence threat to a bargaining object, this morning becomes an operational de-escalation mechanism, and simultaneously a rhetorical escalation. Sobh-e No fronts an Iran-Oman 'understanding on a new corridor,' reporting that after the Omani foreign minister's Tehran visit the two states agreed to review a temporary maritime corridor with mine-clearing, traffic-management and security provisions; Jomhuri Eslami carries the matching 'joint Iran-Oman statement,' and Defa Press details the phased framework. Yet Kayhan's editorial, the same morning, insists Iran holds the Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb chokepoints and should escalate its demands, and Nour News reports the strait's traffic has collapsed to five transits on Tuesday against a recent average of fifteen. The chokepoint is being negotiated open and rhetorically kept closed in the same cycle, and the two lanes now diverge visibly on it.

Beneath the great-power drama, domestic economic strain surfaces on the front pages in a way the boomerang triumphalism cannot absorb. Hamshahri leads with 'Tehran against fuel-burning,' a municipal warning to the government over the gasoline-shortage crisis; Sazandegi promises 'it won't get more expensive' while conceding ration cuts; Sobh-e No fights a fuel-price rumor. Etemad carries economy minister Hemmati's insistence that the dollar's move past 300,000 is 'temporary'; Nour News reports jet fuel up roughly 50 percent since late February; Charsou defends the administration's monetary record with a comparative league table. The cost side of the sanctions ledger, muted in the defiance narrative, is legible at the pump and the exchange counter.

Two secondary threads round out the cycle. An information-operations front widens: Vatan-e Emrooz runs 'British forgery' and 'propaganda war,' and Sobh-e No fronts a 'battle over the zero-point narrative,' contesting an Al Jazeera documentary's account of the war's origins, so that control of the war's story becomes its own theater. And on the ceasefire's edge, Fars relays Al-Mayadeen reporting of intense Israeli strikes on southern

Lebanon, a reminder that the fragile 17 June understanding has not stilled the Lebanon front, though the claim is single-sourced and carried as such.

Net assessment: this is a great-power edition wrapped around an internal rupture. The overt story is that China has stepped from the wings to become Iran's declared shield against the largest sanctions package since 2018, and the press has moved from asserting the sanctions will boomerang to naming the actor who will make them do so. The consequential story underneath is that the Iranian system is now fighting itself in public over how to end the war: the establishment and reformist-government lane sells a Pakistani-mediated, Oman-assisted diplomatic off-ramp, and the hardline flagship works openly to blow it up, calling the mediator an enemy agent and the strait a weapon to be pressed harder. The threads to watch are whether China's 'support' materializes as named, verifiable commercial or diplomatic commitments; whether the Kayhan-versus-government fight over Asim Munir hardens into a decision to abandon or pursue the channel; and whether the Iran-Oman corridor produces an actual change in Hormuz transit or remains, like the mediation, a claim contested from within.

BOTTOM LINE The 26 August batch converts the sanctions story into a great-power confrontation, elevating China's formal protest into a strategic shield, while the Iranian system fractures in public over the Pakistani mediation meant to end the war: the government-establishment lane touts progress and the hardline flagship brands the mediator an American agent and the whole channel a deception.

CRITICAL SOURCING NOTE Compiled from ten front-page scans read directly (nine Persian titles from the NewspaperTasnim album of 4 Shahrivar 1405 plus the English Iran Daily) and from monitored outlet and agency channels (Kayhan as a daily and source of the flagged editorial; Defa Press, Fars News and Nour News as wire agencies used for corroboration and labeled as claims). Tehran Times was unavailable at compile time and is not cited this cycle. All Iranian battlefield, damage and satisfaction claims, and all second-hand renderings of Western media, are attributed and not adopted as fact. The mediation's scope is treated as contested: Jomhuri Eslami's 'Tehran-Washington talks' framing is logged against Iran Daily's narrower 'Iran-Pakistan talks on the Islamabad MoU,' and the broader US-Iran-progress claim is reported as attributed, not confirmed. 'The Leader' denotes Mojtaba Khamenei; Ali Khamenei is referenced only as the martyred predecessor. No quotes or source links were fabricated.

Macro Trend Analysis

① China moves from bystander to declared backstop

The cycle's defining shift is the elevation of China from a background beneficiary of Iranian oil to the named actor who will defeat the sanctions. China formally protested the new US measures as unilateral and signaled its Iran ties 'should not be disrupted'; Vatan-e Emrooz stamps a giant 'No' over Trump and Xi, Etemad runs 'Beijing's counterstrike,' Ta'adol 'Beijing's warning to Washington,' Sobh-e No 'China's red line' and Sazandegi 'opposition to America.' Corroborated by Defa Press (via Bloomberg) and Nour News (via the Independent), the convergence across separately owned titles indicates a supplied great-power frame and continues the standing adversary-decay thread, now with a patron attached (attributed argumentation; 'Chinese companies will support Iran' remains uncoded and unnamed).

② The Pakistani mediation fractures the system in public

The Munir channel that the government-reformist lane welcomed on 25 August now divides the press openly. Jomhuri Eslami fronts 'significant progress in Tehran-Washington talks' and Iran Daily reports progress on the 'Islamabad MoU'; Javan accepts the channel but hardens it to 'the memorandum only'; Kayhan's flagship

editorial brands Asim Munir 'an American operative' and the mediation a 'deception operation.' This is a break from the 25 August shared-boomerang consensus: the hardline flagship has shifted from subordinating the diplomacy to actively trying to discredit it, converting the diplomacy-versus-deterrence tension into a fight over whether the war should be ended at all.

3 Hormuz negotiated open, rhetorically kept closed

The chokepoint splits along the same fault line. Sobh-e No fronts an Iran-Oman 'understanding on a new corridor' (a temporary maritime passage with mine-clearing and traffic management), Jomhourī Eslami carries the matching joint statement, and Defa Press details the phased framework, an operational de-escalation track. Against it, Kayhan's editorial insists Iran should press the Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb chokepoints harder, and Nour News reports transit collapsing to five vessels on Tuesday against a fifteen-vessel average. The strait is simultaneously a diplomatic corridor Iran is helping to open and a weapon the hardline lane wants kept cocked, a single-cycle divergence that did not exist a week ago.

4 Domestic economic strain surfaces under the triumphalism

The cost side of the sanctions ledger reaches the front pages. Hamshahri leads with a municipal warning over the gasoline-shortage crisis and stalled war-damage reconstruction; Sazandegi promises price stability but concedes ration cuts; Sobh-e No fights a fuel-price rumor; Etemad carries Hemmati's 'the dollar past 300,000 is temporary'; Nour News reports jet fuel up about 50 percent since late February; Charsou defends the administration's monetary record. The economic-realist lane keeps acknowledging the squeeze as legitimate rather than defeatist, holding the fault line with the hardline loyalty-test framing that ran through the prior cycle.

5 The information war over the sanctions and the war's origins

A distinct narrative-control front widens. Vatan-e Emrooz runs 'British forgery' and 'propaganda war' against a claimed Western information operation, while Sobh-e No fronts a 'battle over the zero-point narrative,' contesting an Al Jazeera documentary's account of how the war began. Control of the story, of who started the war and of what the sanctions mean, is treated as its own contested theater alongside the economic and diplomatic ones.

6 Leadership by absence persists on a high-stakes cycle

No message from the sitting Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, appears on any front page or channel; the leadership register is carried by President Pezeshkian's governance-and-delivery events (solar plants, housing handovers) and by economic and security voices. On a cycle defined by China's entry, a fracturing mediation and a Hormuz understanding, the current Leader's continued editorial silence above the fray is recorded as negative evidence in the succession picture, consistent with the pattern since the 28 February assassination.

Key Judgments

KJ-1 [HIGH] China has moved from silent beneficiary to Iran's declared great-power shield against the US sanctions. Beijing formally protested the new measures as unilateral and signaled its Iran ties should not be disrupted; the story leads Vatan-e Emrooz ('No,' over Trump and Xi), Etemad ('Beijing's counterstrike'), Ta'adol ('Beijing's warning to Washington'), Sobh-e No ('China's red line') and Sazandegi, and is corroborated by Defa Press (via Bloomberg) and Nour News (via the Independent). Significance: this converts the standing 'boomerang' thread from self-assertion into a claimed external mechanism, giving the

anti-sanctions narrative a named patron; but the concrete content, 'Chinese companies will support Iran,' is uncoded and unnamed, so the shift is real in framing and unproven in substance.

KJ-2 [HIGH] The Pakistani mediation track has openly fractured the Iranian system, the sharpest intra-system split of the war to date. Jomhuri Eslami and Iran Daily front the channel as producing 'significant progress,' Javan accepts it only on hardened terms ('the memorandum only'), while Kayhan's flagship editorial brands the mediator Asim Munir 'an American operative' and the mediation a 'deception operation.' Significance: the hardline flagship has shifted from subordinating the diplomacy (its 25 August posture) to actively working to discredit and derail it, exposing a real fight over whether to pursue an off-ramp at all and identifying the specific channel, and person, the rejectionist lane will target.

KJ-3 [MODERATE-HIGH] The Strait of Hormuz has become an operational de-escalation mechanism and a rhetorical escalation in the same cycle. Sobh-e No and Jomhuri Eslami front an Iran-Oman understanding on a temporary maritime corridor with mine-clearing, and Defa Press details the phased framework; simultaneously Kayhan's editorial urges pressing the Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb chokepoints harder, and Nour News reports transit collapsing to five vessels on Tuesday against a fifteen-vessel average. Significance: the chokepoint is being negotiated open by the government-establishment lane and rhetorically kept closed by the hardline lane, a visible divergence that maps the diplomacy-versus-deterrence split onto the war's most consequential physical lever.

KJ-4 [MODERATE] The mediation's substance is contested even in how it is framed, and the broadest claim outruns its corroboration. Jomhuri Eslami reports 'significant progress in Tehran-Washington talks under Pakistani mediation,' while the outward-facing Iran Daily renders the same development more narrowly as 'Iran-Pakistan talks on the Islamabad MoU.' Significance: the gap between an asserted US-Iran contact and a bilateral Iran-Pakistan process signals that the strongest version of the progress claim is not independently confirmed; it is logged as attributed, and the two-audience architecture (harder inward, softer outward) is again visible in the split.

KJ-5 [MODERATE-HIGH] Domestic economic strain has broken onto the front pages across lanes, puncturing the boomerang triumphalism. Hamshahri leads on the gasoline-shortage crisis and stalled war-damage reconstruction; Sazandegi concedes ration cuts; Etemad carries Hemmati's 'the dollar past 300,000 is temporary'; Nour News reports jet fuel up about 50 percent since late February. Significance: the pressure the defiance narrative frames as self-defeating for Washington is simultaneously being felt at the Iranian pump and exchange counter, and the economic-realist lane's continued insistence that candor about hardship is legitimate keeps an open rhetorical fault line with the hardline demand for unbroken optimism.

KJ-6 [MODERATE] An information-operations front is widening alongside the economic and diplomatic ones. Vatan-e Emrooz runs 'British forgery' and 'propaganda war' against a claimed Western operation, and Sobh-e No fronts a 'battle over the zero-point narrative,' contesting an Al Jazeera documentary's account of the war's origins. Significance: the Iranian press is treating control of the war's story, both its origins and the meaning of the sanctions, as a distinct theater, which indicates centrally-managed narrative discipline rather than incidental commentary and should be tracked for the specific claims it seeks to pre-empt.

KJ-7 [MODERATE] Negative-evidence finding: the sitting Supreme Leader again issued no message and appears only by absence. No statement from Mojtaba Khamenei features on any front page or channel; the leadership register is carried by President Pezeshkian's governance events and by economic and security

voices. Significance: on a cycle defined by China's entry, a fracturing mediation and a Hormuz understanding, the current Leader's continued silence above the fray is a standing marker in the succession picture and is recorded as negative evidence, consistent with the pattern since the 28 February assassination of Ali Khamenei.

Named-Figure Tracker

Figure	Role / relevance	Today's framing	Flag
Xi Jinping	Chinese leader	Cast as the actor delivering the rebuff to Washington; Beijing's protest of the sanctions is elevated into a strategic shield for Iran (Vatan-e Emrooz, Etemad, Ta'adol, Sazandegi).	NEW NAMED FIGURE
Donald Trump	US President	The overreaching adversary whose 'economic war' and threats (including a reported threat to Oman over the strait) are framed as failing and as validated-in-reverse by China's pushback.	TARGET FRAMING
Asim Munir	Pakistani army chief, the mediation channel's figure	Presented by the government-establishment lane as the broker of progress on the Islamabad understanding, and by Kayhan's editorial as 'an American operative' running a deception, the person at the center of the intra-system split.	WATCH
Abbas Araghchi	Iranian Foreign Minister	Shown concluding the Iran-Oman understanding on a temporary Hormuz corridor with the Omani foreign minister (Sobh-e No), the diplomacy lane's public face on the strait.	WATCH
Abdolnaser Hemmati	Iranian economy minister	Carried insisting the dollar's move past 300,000 is 'temporary' (Etemad), the economic-realist reassurance against currency panic.	WATCH
Masoud Pezeshkian	Iranian President	Foregrounded through governance-and-delivery events (95-megawatt solar plants, 2,295 housing units) and above-politics messaging, carrying the executive leadership register in the Leader's absence.	WATCH
Mojtaba Khamenei	Supreme Leader	Issued no message and appears only by absence; the leadership register is carried by the executive and by security and economic voices.	absence noted

Headline Summary Table

Outlet	Lead Headline (English)	Orientation	Theme	Threat signal
Vatan-e Emrooz	No	Hardline / principlist	China rejects the US sanctions as unilateral; a great-power 'No' over Trump and Xi	MODERATE-HIGH: great-power alignment plus conditioned Hormuz coercion
Etemad	Beijing's counterstrike	Reformist	China's formal protest as the day's diplomatic lever, paired with a call for internal reform	MODERATE: great-power framing with reform advocacy
Ta'adol	Markets on the path of correction	Economic / business	Market easing tied to 'Beijing's warning to	LOW-MODERATE: markets pricing

Outlet	Lead Headline (English)	Orientation	Theme	Threat signal
			Washington' as the swing variable	sanctions against China's counter-pressure
Jomhuri Eslami	Significant progress in Tehran-Washington talks under Pakistani mediation	Traditional / establishment	The most forward pro-diplomacy claim, plus the Iran-Oman Hormuz statement	MODERATE: diplomacy-forward, claim outruns corroboration
Iran Daily	'Significant progress' made during Iran-Pakistan talks on Islamabad MoU	Official English-language state daily	Softer outward framing of the mediation; op-ed casts China as Iran's 'historic opportunity'	MODERATE: outward stability framing with a China-partnership pitch
Javan	Iran's unified position conveyed to the mediator: the memorandum only	Hardline, IRGC-affiliated	Accepts the channel but hardens terms; Washington must act first	MODERATE: conditional engagement with a hardening line
Kayhan	Sending a mediator is a deception operation	Ultra-hardline flagship (channel)	Brands Asim Munir 'an American operative'; urges pressing the chokepoints harder	HIGH: rejectionist counter to the mediation plus chokepoint escalation
Sobh-e No	An understanding on a new corridor	Principlist	Iran-Oman temporary Hormuz corridor with mine-clearing; fights fuel and narrative rumors	MODERATE-HIGH: active Hormuz de-escalation against continued closure
Sazandegi	It won't get more expensive	Reformist / Kargozaran	Fuel-price reassurance with ration cuts; China's 'opposition to America' as backing	LOW-MODERATE: fuel strain amid currency pressure
Hamshahri	Tehran against fuel-burning	Centrist, Tehran municipality	Municipal warning over the gasoline-shortage crisis and stalled war-damage reconstruction	LOW-MODERATE: domestic economic strain
Charsou	Pezeshkian first, Raisi last	Economic / political	Comparative defense of the administration's monetary record; anti-US 'oil death' frame	LOW: domestic economic argument

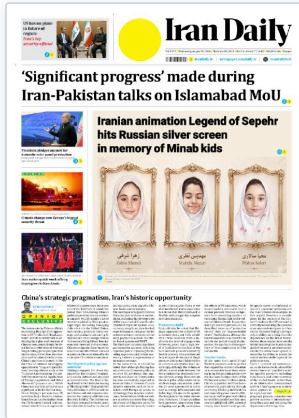
Per-Paper Front-Page Analysis

Iran Daily Official English-language state daily

“Significant progress”

made during Iran-Pakistan talks on Islamabad MoU”

MODERATE: outward-facing stability framing with a strategic-partnership pitch to China



- Main: the outward-facing English daily reports 'significant progress' in Iran-Pakistan talks on the 'Islamabad MoU', a deliberately narrower framing than Jomhuri Eslami's Persian 'Tehran-Washington talks under Pakistani mediation'; the softer English version projects a bilateral, stabilizing story to foreign readers.
- Op-ed (Opinion Exclusive): 'China's strategic pragmatism, Iran's historic opportunity', reading Beijing's stance on the sanctions as an opening for Iran to lock in a strategic partnership, the English-language elevation of the day's China theme.
- Sub-item: 'US has no place in the future of the region', attributed to a top Iranian security official, paired with a photo of an Iran-Iraq official meeting.
- Culture: 'Iranian animation Legend of Sepehr hits Russian silver screen in memory of Minab kids', naming Zahra Sharafi, Mahdis Nazari and Mahya Salari; and 'President pledges support for domestic solar-panel production'.
- Sub-item: 'Climate change now Europe's biggest security threat', and a sports note, 'Iran makes quick work of Iraq to progress to the knockouts'.

ANALYST NOTE The state English paper continues the two-audience architecture: where the Persian establishment front claims US-Iran progress outright, Iran Daily downgrades the same development to bilateral Iran-Pakistan progress on the 'Islamabad MoU', a calmer story for external consumption, and promotes China from sanctions-protester to 'historic opportunity' partner. The 'US has no place in the region' line is the one hard-edged outward message, aimed at the regional-order debate.

«تهران علیه «Tehran against fuel-burning»

LOW-MODERATE: domestic economic strain, fuel and reconstruction

بنزین سوزی»



- Main: the Tehran mayor's office announces that a capital-wide energy-consumption-management task force will be formed, cast as a serious warning to the government over the gasoline-shortage crisis; the strap notes two more refineries are to be added to production capacity. A stylized fuel-pump graphic reading all zeros anchors the page.
- Sub-item: 'Ordinary people, real heroes' (آدم‌های معمولی، قهرمان‌های واقعی), a human-interest photo of a mother with newborn twins wrapped in an Iranian flag.
- Sub-item: 'Was the dollar surge tamed?' (جهش دلار مهار شد?), reporting central-bank intervention to calm the currency after recent volatility.
- Sub-item: 'Obstruction on the path of rebuilding homes' (سنگ‌اندازی در مسیر بازسازی خانه‌ها), on bureaucratic delays in reconstructing housing damaged in the war.
- Op-ed: 'To whom do we give the gasoline?' (بنزین را به چه کسی دهیم?), a rationing-fairness argument.

ANALYST NOTE The municipal centrist paper localizes the national sanctions-and-currency squeeze into a concrete gasoline-rationing and war-reconstruction story, the clearest domestic-strain front of the day. Its quiet inclusion of stalled war-damage rebuilding keeps the human cost of the conflict on the page even as the political fronts run great-power diplomacy. A useful counterweight to the boomerang triumphalism: the pressure is being felt at the pump.

«نه» «No»

MODERATE-HIGH: great-power alignment framing plus conditioned Hormuz coercion



- Banner: a full-width photograph of US President Donald Trump beside Chinese leader Xi Jinping, overprinted with a single giant yellow 'No' (نه), casting Beijing as the actor delivering the rebuff.
- Main: the strapline reports that China, while opposing the unilateral US sanctions (تحریم‌های یکجانبه) against Iran, affirmed Iran's rights and interests and that Chinese companies will continue to support Iran, elevating the sanctions story into a great-power alignment frame.
- Right rail: 'Agreement to create a temporary corridor' (توافق برای ایجاد کریدور) reports the Iran-Oman understanding on a temporary maritime passage through the Strait of Hormuz, tagged 'on condition of Iran's management' (به شرط مدیریت ایران).
- Sub-item: 'British forgery' (جعل انگلیسی) and 'Propaganda war' (جنگ تبلیغاتی) frame a claimed Western/Persian-service information operation against Iran; a small reproduction of a Guardian front page ('Iranian facing stoning speaks') is cited as an example.
- Kicker: 'Three decades after Oslo' (دهه پس از اسلو ۳) runs a retrospective attack on the Oslo accords and the Palestinian track.

ANALYST NOTE The hardline flagship of the day leads not with defiance in its own voice but with China's 'No' to the US sanctions, converting the standing boomerang thread into great-power validation: the sanctions fail because Beijing refuses them. It pairs this with the Hormuz temporary-corridor development (conditioned on Iranian control) and an information-war frame, keeping coercion and grievance bundled. Watch whether 'Chinese companies will support Iran' hardens into named, verifiable commercial commitments or stays a slogan.

«ابلاغ موضع واحد ایران به میانجی؛ "Iran's unified position conveyed to the mediator: the memorandum only" فقط تفاهم نامه»



- Banner: 'China's "with Iran" message to the world' (پیام «با ایران» چین به جهان) frames Beijing's stance as an open declaration of alignment with Tehran against the US pressure campaign.
- Main: Iran has communicated a single, unified position to the mediator: adherence to the memorandum (تفاهم نامه) and nothing beyond it, presenting the negotiating line as settled and non-negotiable.
- Sub-item: 'America must take practical steps to implement the conditions of the Islamabad memorandum' (آمریکا باید اقدامات عملی را در اجرای شرط), placing the onus for progress on Washington and casting Iran as the party already in compliance.
- Photo: a group of senior Iranian officials, an IRGC commander in uniform among civilian figures, used to project institutional unity behind the stated position.
- Right rail: items on 'unity from ideal to power' (وحدت از آرمان تا قدرت) and market/economic notes reinforcing a resolve-and-endurance frame.

ANALYST NOTE The IRGC-affiliated daily accepts the Pakistani mediation channel but hardens its terms: 'the memorandum only,' with Washington obliged to act first. This is a shift from the reformist lane's 25 August 'ambassador of rescue' framing toward a conditions-imposed posture, and it sits between the government bloc's optimism and Kayhan's outright rejection of the mediator. Continuity of the Islamabad-understanding thread, now recast as an Iranian ultimatum rather than an opening.

“An understanding on a new corridor” «تفاهم بر سر کریدور جدید»

MODERATE-HIGH: active Hormuz de-escalation diplomacy against continued closure



- Main: after the Omani foreign minister's Tehran visit, Iran and Oman agreed to review the creation of a temporary corridor (کریدور موقت) through the Strait of Hormuz, including technical measures for safe passage, traffic management and security; a photograph shows Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi shaking hands with his Omani counterpart.
- Banner: an account of the Parliament Speaker's three-day trip to Iraq, distilled as 'three days, three cities, one message: the resistance line is unbreakable' (خط مقاومت «ناگسستنی» است).
- Op-ed box: 'Gasoline in the shadow of rumors' (بنزین در سایه شایعات) reports that the national oil-refining company denied rumors of an imminent price increase, an official pushback against the fuel-panic narrative.
- Sub-item: 'Battle over the zero-point narrative' (جدال بر سر نقطه صفر روایت) frames an Al Jazeera documentary on the war as a contested account of its origins.
- Sub-item: 'China's red line' (خط قرمز چین) reports Beijing's unprecedented stance against the new US sanctions; 'Trump's delusions' (توهمات ترامپ) asks why the US president threatened Oman over closing the strait.

ANALYST NOTE The principlist paper operationalizes the Hormuz thread that was only a bargaining abstraction on 25 August: it names Oman as the broker of a concrete temporary maritime corridor with mine-clearing and traffic-management provisions. It simultaneously fights two information fronts, the fuel-price rumor and the Al Jazeera 'zero point' narrative, while folding China's 'red line' into the anti-sanctions frame. The corridor detail is the day's clearest de-escalation mechanism on the strait.

«It won't get more expensive» گران نمی شود»

LOW-MODERATE: fuel-price reassurance amid rationing and currency strain

نمی شود»



- Main: the First Vice President and the Deputy Speaker of Parliament announced that the gasoline price will not rise before year-end, but that rations (سهمیها) will be cut, a reassurance-with-a-catch on the fuel crisis; a red fuel-gauge graphic pointing to empty anchors the page.
- Right rail: 'Opposition to America' (مخالفت با آمریکا) over a photograph of Xi Jinping, reporting China's stance in support of Iran against the US pressure campaign.
- Sub-item: 'Incomplete plan' (طرح ناقص), a critical read of a government or parliamentary initiative.
- Kicker: 'Record chain' (زنجیره رکورد) on market records under currency pressure.
- Op-ed: a 'Yadasht-e Rooz' column ('Why zero?') by reformist economist Saeed Laylaz.

ANALYST NOTE The Kargozaran-aligned reformist paper manages the fuel-crisis narrative from the government side, promising price stability while conceding ration cuts, and imports China's 'opposition to America' as external validation. It sits with the economic-realist settlement bloc: acknowledge the squeeze, credit diplomacy and great-power backing, avoid the hardline demand for unbroken optimism.

«Pezeshkian first, Raisi last» «پزشکیان اول شد، رئیسی آخر»



- Main: a comparative league table ranking post-revolution administrations by a money-printing (چاپ پول) index places the Pezeshkian government first (least) and the Raisi government last (most), a data-driven defense of the current administration's monetary record.
- Sub-item: 'Money-printing in the fourteenth government equals all money-printing since antiquity' (معادل کل چاپ پول از زمان هُوخشتره), a rhetorical framing of the cumulative liquidity problem inherited by the administration.
- Sub-item: 'Countdown to America's oil death' (روزشمار مرگ نفتی آمریکا) over a US flag and refinery imagery, the anti-US energy-decline frame.
- Bottom: the industry minister cited claiming 82 percent of people are satisfied with the Pezeshkian government's performance (۸۲ درصد مردم از عملکرد دولت پزشکیان راضی هستند), an attributed and self-serving figure.
- Sidebar: 'Money-printing in Iran's history' with a 519-thousand-billion-toman liquidity figure.

ANALYST NOTE The economic paper runs a two-sided argument: a comparative defense of the Pezeshkian administration's macro record and an anti-US 'oil death' frame, aligning economic realism with the settlement bloc while still feeding the adversary-decline narrative. The '82 percent satisfaction' claim is attributed to a minister and should not be read as survey data. Continuity of Charsou's 25 August league-table defense of the administration.

“Significant progress in Tehran-

MODERATE: diplomacy-forward, but the headline claim outruns its corroboration

Washington talks under Pakistani mediation” «پیشرفت قابل توجه در مذاکرات تهران - واشنگتن با میانجیگری پاکستان»



- Main: the paper asserts 'significant progress' in Tehran-Washington negotiations brokered by Pakistan, the most explicit pro-diplomacy framing of the batch (attributed claim; the English Iran Daily renders the same development more narrowly as progress in Iran-Pakistan talks on the 'Islamabad MoU').
- Sub-item: a 'Joint Iran-Oman statement on maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz' (بیانیه مشترک ایران و عمان درباره تردد دریایی در تنگه هرمز), corroborating the Oman-brokered corridor track.
- Photo: President Pezeshkian inaugurating 95-megawatt solar power plants in Tehran province, paired with a centralized handover of 2,295 urban and rural housing units in Hamedan, foregrounding governance-and-delivery messaging.
- Op-ed: 'America's maximum-pressure policy will fail' (سیاست فشار حداکثری), the establishment version of the boomerang thesis.
- Sub-item: the presidential legal deputy announced a 'counter-infiltration plan' (طرح مقابله با نفوذ), with a companion note that the plan's flaws must be fixed before passage.

ANALYST NOTE The establishment daily is the most forward-leaning on diplomacy, fronting 'significant progress' on actual Tehran-Washington contact via Pakistan and the Iran-Oman Hormuz statement together. The gap between its 'Tehran-Washington talks' framing and Iran Daily's softer 'Iran-Pakistan talks on the Islamabad MoU' is itself a signal of how far different lanes will push the claim; both sit in direct tension with Kayhan's same-day 'the mediator is a deception operation.' The single sharpest intra-system fault line of the cycle runs between this front page and Kayhan's.

"Markets on the path of correction" «بازارها در مسیر اصلاح»

LOW-MODERATE: markets pricing sanctions against China's counter-pressure



- Main: the paper reads an easing across markets, with the gold coin returning to the 215-million-toman channel (بازگشت سکه به کانال ۲۱۵ میلیون), framing the sanctions shock as being absorbed rather than compounding.
- Photo pair: the US State Department spokesman set against the Chinese foreign-ministry spokesman under 'Beijing's warning to Washington' (هشدار) (پکن به واشنگتن), tying the market's direction to China's pushback on the new US sanctions.
- Sub-item: a package on 'Trump's economic war' (جنگ اقتصادی ترامپ) reading the sanctions as an economic-warfare instrument rather than a diplomatic one.
- Right rail: 'The state and the economic war: why macro reforms can no longer be postponed' (چرا اصلاحات کلان دیگر قابل توفیق نیست؟), a call for structural reform under external pressure.
- Left rail: 'Bourse record-breaking in the dollar's shadow' (رکوردشکنی بورس) (زیر سایه دلار) and a note on production constrained by speculative markets.

ANALYST NOTE The business daily prices the moment rather than sloganeers it: a market correction paired with 'Beijing's warning to Washington' as the swing variable, which ties Iran's de-escalation hopes to China's stance rather than to its own defiance. Its 'macro reforms can no longer be postponed' line aligns the economic-realist camp with the settlement bloc, continuity of Ta'adol's 25 August 'between agreement and rising tension' read.

«پاتک پکن» «Beijing's counterstrike»



- Main: China formally objected to the new US sanctions on Iran; the foreign-ministry spokesman is quoted calling the measures unilateral (یکجانبه). Etemad presents Beijing's protest as the day's decisive diplomatic lever against the pressure campaign.
- Banner: an expert-interview package headlined 'the unprecedented achievements of Iranian diplomacy in the age of super-crisis' (دستاوردهای بی سابقه دیپلماسی ایران در عصر ابربحران), examining what the mediation and great-power tracks have actually delivered.
- Sub-item: 'Trump's imposed diplomacy' (دیپلماسی تحمیلی ترامپ) and a report that an Iranian figure wrote to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights arguing that 'sanctions are the collective punishment of a nation' (تحریم مجازات دسته جمعی یک ملت است).
- Sub-item: 'Courageous reforms in the governance system' (اصلاحات شجاعانه در نظام حکمرانی), a reform-bloc call to pair external diplomacy with internal change.
- Right rail: economy minister Hemmati that the dollar's move past 300,000 is temporary (عبور دلار از ۳۰۰ هزار موقتی است), an official effort to steady expectations.

ANALYST NOTE The reformist flagship makes China, not Iranian defiance, the protagonist of the sanctions story, and couples the external lever with an internal demand for 'courageous reforms' in governance, the settlement bloc's signature pairing. Carrying Hemmati's 'temporary' dollar reassurance keeps Etemad aligned with the economic-realist camp against the hardline loyalty-test framing. Continuity of the 25 August reform-and-diplomacy lane, now anchored to Beijing's formal protest.

Kayhan

Ultra-hardline flagship (channel), close to the Supreme Leader's office

"Sending a mediator is a **HIGH: rejectionist counter to the mediation plus explicit chokepoint-escalation advocacy** deception operation" «اعزام میانجی، عملیات فریب است»

- Op-ed (Yadasht-e Rooz, Kayhan's institutional analytical voice): the lead editorial argues that after military failure the US shifted to economic warfare and is now deploying mediators as a 'deception operation' (عملیات فریب); it names the Pakistani channel figure Asim Munir as 'an American operative' (مهره آمریکایی), not an honest broker.
- Op-ed: the editorial claims Iran holds the strategic chokepoints, the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb, and can therefore raise, not soften, its demands in any talks, and that the Supreme National Security Council has vowed decisive responses to any US violation.
- Main (channel): 'US military power failed against Iran' (attributed to the Independent) and 'American media acknowledges billions of dollars in damage from Iran to the US' (attributed to NBC), the battlefield-vindication frame.
- Sub-item: 'Trump insists on Saudi normalization with the Israeli regime' tied to a nuclear file, folding Riyadh into the adversary-overreach picture.
- Sub-item: 'Free entry and exit of Israeli regime forces into Syrian territory under the Jolani government', on Israeli movement in post-transition Syria (attributed claim).

ANALYST NOTE The single most consequential front of the cycle: Kayhan is now actively attacking the very mediation channel that Jomhuri Eslami and Iran Daily present as progress, branding Asim Munir an American operative and the mediator gambit a 'deception.' This is a sharp break from the 25 August shared-boomerang consensus, converting the intra-system diplomacy-versus-deterrence tension into an open effort by the hardline flagship to discredit and derail the Pakistani track. Its Hormuz-and-Bab-al-Mandeb escalation rhetoric runs directly counter to the Iran-Oman corridor de-escalation the principlist and establishment fronts report the same morning.

Appendix A - The Leader's register: continued absence (negative-evidence note)

Full-page review of all ten scanned front pages plus the monitored outlet and agency channels (Kayhan, Nour News, Fars News, Defa Press), 4 Shahrivar 1405

No first-person message, sermon, or directive from the sitting Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, appeared on any front page or in any monitored channel in this cycle. As on the preceding editions, the leadership register was carried instead by the executive (President Pezeshkian's solar-plant and housing-delivery events, foregrounded by Jomhuri Eslami) and by security and economic voices, not by the Leader himself.

This is recorded as a finding, not as missing content. On a cycle defined by China's formal entry into the sanctions confrontation, an openly contested Pakistani mediation track, and an Iran-Oman understanding on the Strait of Hormuz, the current Leader's continued editorial silence above the fray is a standing marker in the succession picture. It is consistent with the pattern logged since the 28 February 2026 assassination of Ali Khamenei and Mojtaba Khamenei's assumption of the office: the martyred predecessor is invoked in regime vocabulary, while the sitting Leader does not personally drive the daily message.

Handling note: no Leader message was fabricated or reconstructed for this appendix. The khamenei.ir lead-message surface was not relied upon for a same-day statement; the absence is reported as printed and monitored.

Appendix B - The day's flagged editorial: Kayhan, 'Sending a mediator is a deception operation'

Kayhan 'Yadasht-e Rooz' analytical report, t.me/s/kayhan_online post 81943, 4 Shahrivar 1405 (26 August 2026); published under Kayhan's institutional analytical byline, managing editor Hossein Shariatmadari

Author verification: the piece carries Kayhan's institutional analytical byline ('gozaresh-e khabari-tahlili-ye Kayhan') rather than a named columnist; it appears in the paper's flagship 'Yadasht-e Rooz' slot, which is editorially controlled by managing editor Hossein Shariatmadari. It is rendered here as an editorial position of Kayhan, documented for defensive assessment only and not endorsed.

The editorial's central claim: having failed in direct military confrontation, Washington has switched to economic warfare and is now sending intermediaries to Tehran as a fresh tactic. Kayhan frames this mediation not as diplomacy but as a 'deception operation' (amaliyat-e farib) intended to extract concessions the battlefield did not deliver.

On the mediator: the editorial characterizes the visits of figures such as Asim Munir as the execution of Washington's instructions rather than honest brokerage, calling his presence that of 'an American operative' (yek mohreh-ye Amrikayi). This is Kayhan's own characterization and is directly contested by the government-reformist lane, which the same morning presents the Pakistani channel as producing 'significant progress.'

On leverage: the editorial asserts that Iran, not the US, holds the initiative because it controls the strategic chokepoints, the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandeb, and can therefore escalate its demands in any talks. It dismisses the threatened 'economic D-Day' and maximum sanctions as a repetition of already-failed strategies, and states that the Supreme National Security Council has promised a decisive, regrettable response to any American violation.

Analyst flag: unverified attributed claims within the editorial (US military 'failure,' the scale of damage to US facilities, the reading of Munir's intent) are not to be reproduced as authenticated fact. The significance for this monitor is the intra-system move: the hardline flagship is working to discredit the mediation track that other Iranian fronts present as an opening, and its chokepoint-escalation rhetoric runs directly against the Iran-Oman corridor de-escalation reported the same day.

Appendix C - Methodology and sourcing notes

iran-press-digest v2 pipeline, edition of 26 August 2026 (Day 176)

Sources: ten front-page scans were read directly by vision, nine Persian titles from the NewspaperTasnim daily album (t.me/NewspaperTasnim/44211, printed date Wednesday 4 Shahrivar 1405) and one English page (Iran Daily) from the Newspapers_Iran album (t.me/newspapers_iran/3548). Scanned titles identified: Hamshahri, Vatan-e Emrooz, Javan, Sobh-e No, Sazandegi, Charsou, Jomhuri Eslami, Ta'adol and Etemad, plus Iran Daily. Text channels were monitored via t.me/s/ previews: Kayhan (daily; source of the flagged editorial), plus the wire agencies Defa Press, Fars News and Nour News, used for corroboration and threat context only and labeled as claims.

Coverage gaps: Tehran Times was unavailable at the time of compilation and is not cited this cycle. Among the channel-listed dailies, Jam-e Jam, Iran and Vatan-e Emrooz were covered through the front-page scans and the general channel sweep rather than individual channel fetches; where a claim rests on a single outlet it is flagged in text.

Attribution firewall: all Iranian battlefield and damage claims (NBC/Independent renderings of US 'failure' and dollar-figure damage, Al-Mayadeen's southern-Lebanon strike reporting, the money-printing league table and the '82 percent satisfaction' figure) are attributed to their outlet or speaker and are not adopted as fact. Second-hand quotations of Western media carried by Iranian titles remain flagged; quoting a rendering does not verify it.

Accuracy notes: 'the Leader' in current coverage denotes Mojtaba Khamenei; Ali Khamenei was assassinated on 28 February 2026 and is referenced only as the martyred predecessor. The headline discrepancy on the mediation is logged deliberately: Jomhuri Eslami frames it as 'Tehran-Washington talks under Pakistani mediation' while the English Iran Daily renders the same development more narrowly as 'Iran-Pakistan talks on the Islamabad MoU'; the monitor treats the broader US-Iran-progress claim as attributed and not independently confirmed. Named figures verified against the source pages and, where recurring, against prior editions: Abbas Araghchi (Foreign Minister), Asim Munir (Pakistani army chief, named by Kayhan), Abdolnaser Hemmati (economy minister). Translations are editorial; loaded register terms are glossed inline. No quotes or source links were fabricated.

Open-source material only. All translations from Persian/Arabic originals. Iranian claims are labelled as claims. Prepared for analysis and early warning; hostile content is documented for defensive assessment only, not endorsed.