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Qeshm Island flourishing on path to tourism, investment hub

Social Desk

Iran is working to turn Qeshm Island into a major tourism and investment hub, drawing on international expertise and scientific studies, said Farzin Haghdel, deputy for economic and investment affairs at the Qeshm Free Zone Organization. Stretching across the Persian Gulf, Qeshm is already known for its oil and gas fields and its strategic location, ILNA reported. Officials now see a chance to rebrand the island internationally by focusing on eco-tourism and sustainable industries, Haghdel said. "Qeshm can lead Iran's tourism branding," he added, pointing to the island's unique geology, rich biodiversity, and underdeveloped global image. Qeshm, three times the size of Singapore, hosts 7 to 8 active oil and gas fields, including Salafi, Iran's second-largest gas field. Its vast landmass—larger than 22 countries—makes it an ideal site

for balanced industrial and ecological development, Haghdel said. The island is home to the Middle East's first UNESCO-listed geopark, where conservation efforts go hand in hand with local tourism. The geopark "has become a source of income for communities" while preserving Qeshm's natural ecosystems. Authorities are also in talks with international firms, including a German company, to develop environmentally-friendly steel plants. While some projects have stalled due to political tensions, Haghdel said Qeshm remains a "prime location" for heavy industries that require large amounts of water—something many other Iranian regions lack. With its mix of energy assets, natural beauty, and international partnerships, officials hope Qeshm will emerge not just as a domestic success story but as a global tourism and investment brand.



'Tehran-Amjadieh' to join Barcelona's Medimed Film Market

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian documentary 'Tehran-Amjadieh', directed by Mahmoud Molaei and produced by Mostafa Shoghi, will be featured at the Medimed film market in Barcelona this October, according to ILNA. The Medimed market, an annual event in Spain, brings together producers, broadcasters and distributors across Europe and the Mediterranean to spark co-productions and pitch new content.

The participation of 'Tehran-Amjadieh' is expected to open doors for cross-border collaborations and expand Iran's footprint in the international documentary scene. Produced by House of Documentary, the film traces the layered history of Amjadieh Stadium—now known as Shahid Shiroudi Stadium—which was once hailed as the country's first modern sports arena. The stadium, located in central Tehran, has witnessed "historic events" and social trans-

formations over the decades. The 90-minute documentary is presented in both Persian and English and aims to appeal to a wide international audience. Its presence at Medimed will give global distributors and broadcasters a closer look at Iran's evolving approach to cultural storytelling through sports and urban memory. Medimed, formally known as the Mediterranean Documentary Market, is scheduled for October 9-13 in Sitges, near Barcelona.

Iran names Seyedabadi for iRead award



Arts & Culture Desk

Ali-Asghar Seyedabadi has been nominated by Iran's Children's Book Council for the 2026 iRead Award, a global prize for excellence in reading promotion. The council selected Seyedabadi for the second time after a national call and internal jury review. A long-time reading advocate, he has worked extensively with children and young adults using what the jury described as "innovative" and "sustainable" methods, ISNA reported. The iRead Award, launched by China's Shenzhen Foundation and the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), recognizes individuals with a proven track record—at least three years—of encouraging reading with creativity and commitment. It aims to foster what the organizers call a "global reading culture" and lasting literacy. Nominees are chosen by each country's national section of IBBY. In Iran, the Children's Book Council serves in that role. The jury panel includes children's literature specialists Ali-Akbar Bahar, Jafar Tozandehjani, Fatemeh Chaykar, Roya Shahri, Leila Kafashzadeh and Neda Movahed-dipour.

Beyond applause lies what journalism in Iran really needs



By Hamideh Hosseini
Staff writer

OPINION

Every year on August 8, Iran marks Journalist Day in memory of Mahmoud Saremi, the Iranian reporter killed in Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998 during a Taliban attack on the Iranian consulate. His death, alongside eight diplomats, was not only a national tragedy but a defining moment that carved out a day of recognition for those who pursue truth with a pen. Yet 27 years later, one wonders: do we truly honor Saremi's legacy, or merely

celebrate a date?

Too often, Journalist Day has turned into a shallow ceremony. Messages of congratulations pour in from officials who, for the rest of the year, treat journalists as mouthpieces for institutional public relations. Gift baskets, handouts, and neatly staged photo ops replace meaningful dialogue about press freedom, media independence, or safety for reporters in the field.

Even worse, some reporters are expected to earn their place at the table through loyalty, not integrity. In some provinces, journalists who ask uncomfortable questions risk being labeled "outsiders," while compliant ones are called "conservative" or "trustworthy." This dichotomy, subtle yet corrosive,

erodes the foundation of any functioning media system.

Journalism is not public relations. And journalists are not crisis managers for government image. Yet many PR departments send out templated, low-value content, routine meetings, ribbon cuttings, vague declarations, with the expectation that reporters will publish them without question. These materials often lack news value: No data, no context, no consequence. Still, the pressure to keep institutional relationships intact leads some media outlets to compromise editorial standards for access or favors.

This dynamic drains energy and resources from the real work of journalism, reporting on policy, probing

public funds, and giving voice to those unheard. It also blurs the public's understanding of what journalism should be: A watchdog, not a mouthpiece.

If we want to honor journalists, we must do more than name a day after them. We must protect their independence, respect their role, and push back against the creeping culture of transactional news. We need media-literate institutions that understand the difference between coverage and control. And we need a journalism ecosystem where truth matters more than favor. Saremi didn't die for ceremonial praise. He died doing his job. The least we can do is let others do theirs with freedom, dignity, and purpose.

A comeback after ...

From 2008 to 2020 when Iran was going through consequential political and economic developments, Larijani served as speaker of the Iranian Parliament for three consecutive terms, representing the holy city of Qom. As a moderate and seasoned figure, he managed to strike a relatively functional balance among the three branches of power. Under President Rouhani, and following the costly foreign policy legacy of Ahmadinejad, Larijani threw his weight behind the JCPOA and worked to align the Legislature with the 2015 nuclear accord. That support came at a political

price, with critics branding the ratification process the "20-minute approval" and possibly contributing to his later disqualifications from presidential races. Though rumors had circulated early in Pezeshkian's presidency about Larijani's possible return to the SNSC, it wasn't until after Israel's military aggression that the appointment was finalized. Many analysts view Larijani's comeback as a sign that decision-making institutions are leaning back toward technocratic expertise and rationality. At a time when national security issues and sensitive dossiers demand precise and coordinated deci-

sion-making, Larijani's experience and expertise could prove pivotal in enhancing the quality of management in these areas. His prior track record in handling Iran's nuclear file and regional diplomacy suggests that Iran may now place stronger emphasis on strategic policies and balancing "hard" and "soft" power in the national security framework. Ultimately, the success of this approach will depend on how Larijani leverages his relationships across the political establishment and his ability to leverage a range of tools in dealing with foreign actors.