

IRGC warns of  
'much harsher response'  
to new aggression

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# Pezeshkian calls for collective Muslim push to stop Gaza genocide

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A comeback  
after 20 years

## Will Larijani shape future of national security?

By Goltab Darabi  
Political affairs analyst

O P I N I O N

In a critical juncture for Iran—when the country is in dire need of rational governance, policy experience, and a delicate balance between “resistance” and “engagement”—the appointment of Ali Larijani as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) could be seen as a direct response to such needs. Larijani’s long résumé spans from academic and philosophical work to running Iran’s national broadcaster, serving in top positions in the SNSC, and presiding over the Parliament. His career blends executive experience with intellectual depth. His new appointment comes at a time when Iran and Israel remain under a fragile cease-fire. Just weeks after a surprise meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin—widely interpreted as Larijani’s return to high-level policymaking—Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian officially named the 67-year-old veteran politician to lead the country’s top security body. The move signals an intent to align the SNSC more closely with the presidency to more effectively advance key national security files. Larijani served as head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) from 1993 to 2004. During that 11-year tenure, he played a pivotal role in shaping the country’s official media discourse and expanding the organization’s reach. That period overlapped with a turbulent phase in Iranian politics—from the handover of power from president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to his successor Mohammad Khatami in 1997, through the Reformist Movement, to major regional events like the Afghan civil war and ongoing Middle East crises. Almost 20 years ago, Larijani was also a presidential hopeful. Once considered the frontrunner for the Conservative bloc, his candidacy was sidelined by a crowded right-wing camp, leading to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s eventual win. He made two more attempts to run for president in 2021 and 2024, but on both occasions, his candidacy was disqualified—reportedly on grounds such as not being sufficiently “efficient and prudent”—even before official campaigning began. Back in 2005, it was Ahmadinejad who appointed Larijani as secretary of the SNSC, when the latter—somewhat disparagingly—made a famous statement, saying “We trade a precious pearl for a lollipop,” as a jab at Hassan Rouhani’s nuclear diplomacy who was the SNSC’s secretary handling Iran’s nuclear file. The new government’s policy led to Iran’s nuclear case being brought before the UN Security Council. Charged with managing Iran’s nuclear portfolio, Larijani sought to bridge divides between the country’s political factions and push forward a more cohesive national security strategy. In public statements and press interviews, he repeatedly stressed the importance of avoiding unnecessary tensions and embracing logic and dialogue in resolving security challenges. During talks with Europe—especially with Javier Solana, the then-EU foreign policy chief—Larijani came close to securing an 11-point agreement. But Ahmadinejad publicly rejected the framework, prompting Larijani’s resignation. [Page 8 >](#)

## Hezbollah says will ignore disarmament plan ‘as if it did not exist’



A Hezbollah fighter stands in front of anti-tank artillery at Juroud Aarsal, the Syria-Lebanon border.  
• ALI HASHISHO/REUTERS

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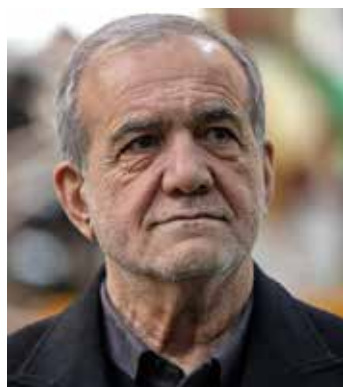


# Pezeshkian calls for collective Muslim push to stop Gaza genocide

## International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Wednesday underscored the necessity of collective efforts by Islamic countries to prevent the continuation of a humanitarian catastrophe caused by the Israeli regime in the besieged Gaza Strip. The Iranian president made the remarks in a phone call with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Wednesday. Pezeshkian called on Muslim countries to leverage active diplomacy and diplomatic pressure to terminate the regime's genocidal war against Palestinians. "The atrocities committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza are unacceptable to any free human being, and I hope that Islamic countries, through active diplomacy and diplomatic pressure, will prevent the continuation of

these crimes and will respond to them with cohesion, unity, and responsibility," the Iranian president said. "The Islamic Republic of Iran has always defended the rights of the oppressed Palestinian nation, and other Islamic countries should adopt a stronger and more active stance in support of the oppressed people of Palestine and Gaza too," he added. "Collective efforts will be very effective in confronting the crimes of the Zionist regime in Gaza." Pointing to the Israeli-imposed 12-day war on the Islamic Republic, Pezeshkian said, "We are blamed for defending the oppressed people of Palestine and their human rights, and we abhor the oppression and tyranny inflicted upon them; the arrogant powers of the world consider this wrong, and that is why they pressure us." Ibrahim, for his part, decried Is-



Masoud Pezeshkian



Anwar Ibrahim

rael's aggression against Palestinians, saying, "The Malaysian government has issued a strong statement against Israel's crimes in Gaza and is pursuing extensive diplomatic efforts to stop the genocide in Gaza. We hope that with the cooperation and assistance of other Islamic countries, we can stop these crimes." The Israeli regime has been rav-

aging the besieged Gaza Strip since Hamas' Operation al-Aqsa Flood on the occupied territories in 2023, killing more than 61,000 Palestinians and wounding upwards of 150,000 others up to now. Most of the victims are women and children, as indiscriminate Israeli attacks target schools, mosques, and even tents that shelter displaced

Palestinians. Israel's relentless bombardment campaign has devastated the territory and led to food shortages, famine, and acute starvation. According to the Gaza Health Ministry on Wednesday, at least 135 Palestinians, including 87 aid seekers, were killed and 771 injured in Israeli attacks across Gaza in just 24 hours. Nearly 200 Palestinians have also lost their lives from starvation in the region.

## Complete takeover of Gaza

On Tuesday, the regime's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met military affairs minister Israel Katz and military chief of staff Eyal Zamir to discuss a complete military takeover of Gaza. However, disagreements emerged over the prospect of the plan, with the regime's military chief of staff saying that

the full occupation would be like "walking into a trap". Netanyahu claimed on Tuesday that Israel must "complete" the defeat of Hamas in order to secure the release of hostages still held in Gaza. The army chief has suggested alternatives to a full occupation, such as an encirclement of specific areas where Hamas is believed to be hunkering down, according to the Channel 12 broadcaster. But Katz hit back with a clear message. "It is the right and duty of the Chief of Staff to express his position in the appropriate forums," he wrote on X. "But once decisions are made by the political echelon, the IDF will execute them with determination and professionalism... until the objectives of the war are achieved," he added, using an acronym for the Israeli military.

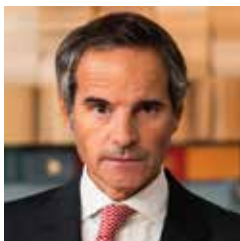
## Hezbollah says will ignore disarmament plan 'as if it did not exist'

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance group said on Wednesday that it would treat Beirut's decision a day earlier to disarm it "as if it did not exist", accusing the cabinet of committing a "grave sin." Amid US pressure, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said the government "tasked the Lebanese army with setting an implementation plan to restrict weapons" to the army and other state forces "before the end of this year", AFP reported. The plan is to be presented to the cabinet by the end of August for discussion and approval. In its first response to the decision, Hezbollah said: "Prime Minister Nawaf Salam's government committed a grave sin by taking the decision to disarm Lebanon of its weapons to resist the Israeli enemy. "This decision undermines Lebanon's sovereignty and gives Israel a free hand to tamper with its security, geography, politics and future existence... Therefore, we will treat this decision as if it does not exist." Hezbollah said it views the decision as "the result of dictates from US envoy" Tom Barrack, referring to a proposal he submitted to authorities calling for the group's disarmament within a timetable. The government said its decision came as part of the implementation of the US-brokered cease-fire agreement that ended the war between Hezbollah and Israel on November 27. The agreement stipulated that government authorities including the army and internal security forces should be the exclusive bearers of weapons in Lebanon.

## Egypt urges resumption of Iran-IAEA cooperation for regional stability

### International Desk

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty called for the resumption of cooperation between Iran and the UN atomic agency aimed at securing stability in the West Asia region. The Egyptian foreign minister made the remarks in separate phone calls with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi and chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi. On June 25, Iran's Parliament ap-



Rafael Grossi



Badr Abdelatty



Abbas Araghchi

proved a bill to suspend Tehran's cooperation with the IAEA following air strikes by Israel and the United States on key Iranian nu-

clear facilities during two weeks of aggression against the Islamic Republic. The IAEA Board of Governors used

his report in its latest session to pass an anti-Iran resolution, which became an excuse for the Israeli regime to launch its aggression against Iran. According to Egypt's Foreign Ministry, Abdelatty stressed the importance of adhering to diplomacy and paving the way for the resumption of cooperation between Tehran and the IAEA, in a manner that contributes to restoring trust and creating an environment conducive to achieving security and stability in the region.

## Mossad spy executed in Iran over assassination of nuclear scientist

### National Desk

Iranian authorities on Wednesday executed a man convicted of spying for Israel by passing on information about a nuclear scientist killed during Israel's 12-day aggression against Iran in June, the Judiciary said. "Roozbeh Vadi... was executed following judicial proceedings and confirmation of his sentence by the Supreme Court," the Judiciary's Mizan Online website said, adding that the man had leaked information about a "nuclear scientist who

was assassinated during the Zionist regime's recent aggression." According to the case documents and Vadi's own confessions, he was fully aware that he was collaborating with Mossad. Mizan reported that Vadi worked at one of Iran's "key and sensitive organizations" and that his access enabled him to pass on "classified information" after being recruited online by Israel's Mossad spy agency and participated in various evaluation stages of Mossad officers. In mid-June, Israel launched an unprecedented bombing cam-

paign against Iran, triggering a war during which Iran responded with missile and drone strikes. The Israeli offensive killed senior military commanders, nuclear scientists and hundreds of civilians, striking both military sites and residential areas. According to local media, at least a dozen nuclear scientists were killed. Iran has since the war began vowed swift trials for people arrested on suspicion of collaborating with Israel. According to reports, more than

700 spies affiliated with Mossad were arrested across Iran amid the Israeli aggression against the country in June. Iran's security agencies also dismantled many underground drone facilities in Tehran and other cities operated by Mossad agents in recent months. Separately on Wednesday, authorities executed a man convicted of being a member of the Daesh terrorist group, who was allegedly planning "terrorist operations inside Iran," according to Mizan.

## IRGC warns of 'much harsher response' to new aggression

### National Desk

Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on Wednesday warned Israel and the US of "much harsher response" to any new aggression against Iran. "Any threat to the security and territorial integrity of the country will be met with a severe response beyond the enemies' imagination, and much harsher than what happened to the warmongering aggressors in the True Promise 3 operation," the IRGC said in a statement. The statement added that Iran's Armed Forces are ready to give a decisive and

regretful response to any threat and aggression from the United States and Israel and their supporters, at any time and in any place. As part of Operation True Promise I in April last year, the IRGC fired more than 300 missiles and drones against the occupied territories in reprisal for deadly aggression by the Israeli regime that had targeted Iranian diplomatic facilities in the Syrian capital of Damascus. In October, the Islamic Republic also launched 200 missiles towards Israeli military and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories as part of Operation True Promise II.



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**Sirjan Jahan Steel Company** is pleased to announce the sale and export of 20,000 MT **Pellet Fines** on basis of FAS at the Buyer's warehouse in Bandar Abbas, IRAN according to INCOTERMS 2020. We invite interested bidders to obtain tender documents by sending an email [sales@sjSCO.ir](mailto:sales@sjSCO.ir). All documentation will be provided electronically. All bids on conformity to tender instruction should be submitted no later than **Monday, August 11, 2025**.

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# Iran, Kazakhstan emphasize \$3b trade target, port development

## Trilateral railway agreement finalized with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

Economy Desk

The roads ministers of Iran and Kazakhstan emphasized achieving the targeted \$3 billion trade volume, highlighting the necessity of developing Iranian ports and increasing commercial traffic through diversification of transportation routes. Separately, during a trilateral meeting between the heads of railways of Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, a joint railway cooperation agreement concerning sponge iron exports and transit was finalized. Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq, who was accompanying First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref to the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries during a visit to Awaza, Turkmenistan – held talks with her Kazakh counterpart Nurlan Sauranbayev on Wednesday. At the meeting, held to strengthen transportation cooperation and formulate a joint roadmap, the Iranian minister highlighted the importance of transit development and joint infrastructure projects. Sadeq stressed the necessity of pursuing the roadmap for the eastern route of the North-South Transport Corridor.

The route developed with Kazakhstan as the focal point and in cooperation with Russia, Turkmenistan, and Iran, whose related document had previously been signed by the deputy ministers of transport of the respective countries. During the meeting, the two sides examined the necessity of strengthening all modes of transport between Iran and Kazakhstan and emphasized the importance of formulating a comprehensive five-year transportation cooperation document. The proposal was put forward by the Iranian side and welcomed by the minister of transport of Kazakhstan. In another part of the meeting, the parties agreed to utilize the capacities of the Caspian Sea to boost transportation cooperation. The Kazakh minister of transport proposed cooperation in projects similar to the Caspian Sea Bridge with the Republic of Azerbaijan. Regarding bilateral trade, achieving the targeted \$3 billion trade volume was a central topic of the discussions. The two sides emphasized the necessity of developing Iranian ports and increasing commercial traffic through diversification of transportation routes. It was also agreed to hold multilateral meetings with



the participation of neighboring countries to develop logistical cooperation on routes leading to the Caucasus and Europe. Concluding the meeting, the ministers agreed to form a joint committee to draft cooperation documents and a comprehensive roadmap before President Masoud Pezeshkian's upcoming visit to Astana.

**Development of border projects with Azerbaijan**  
During a meeting on Tuesday between Iran's minister of roads and urban development and the first deputy prime minister of Azerbaijan, the two sides agreed to undertake a field visit to Astara to assess the latest status of joint border projects. Sadeq, during an official meet-

ing with Shahin Mustafayev, and chairman of the Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation between the two countries, emphasized the development of economic and executive cooperation, particularly in the area of joint border projects. Held within the framework of the joint commission for economic cooperation between Iran and

Azerbaijan, the meeting involved discussions on the latest status of joint projects in border regions. The two sides stressed the necessity of accelerating the implementation of joint border projects, including the Astara Border Terminal and the border bridges under construction.

**Sponge iron exports focus of trilateral deal**  
On the sidelines of the international summit in Awaza, a joint railway cooperation agreement concerning sponge iron exports and transit was finalized during a trilateral meeting of the heads of railways of Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The meeting was participated by the Iranian vice president, minister of roads and urban development, and Jabbarali Zakeri, CEO of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the meeting, the parties emphasized the necessity of expanding railway cooperation and increasing the volume of international freight between the three countries. It was also agreed that a trilateral memorandum of understanding between Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan would be signed to facilitate traffic and remove existing obstacles at border crossing points along transit corridors.

### 'Technology diplomacy': Iran launches fiber optic plant in Venezuela



Economy Desk



Iran's ICT Minister Sattar Hashemi (R) and the governor of La Guaira state, José Alejandro Terán, are seen at the signing ceremony of an agreement on the establishment of a fiber optic factory in Venezuela, in September 2024. ● PRODU

An Iranian fiber optic factory has commenced operations in Venezuela as part of expanding the "technology diplomacy" initiative, announced the minister of information and communications technology (ICT). During a joint meeting with members of the Plan and Budget and Accounts Committee of the Parliament on Tuesday, Sattar Hashemi highlighted the "technology diplomacy" program as one of the priorities of the ministry, adding that over the past year alone, actions have been taken to export technology to countries in the Horn of Africa, Latin America, and Russia, IRNA reported. He expressed hope that exports in this sector would increase tenfold within the program's horizon. The ICT minister pointed to agreements reached with Venezuela, announcing,

"Based on these agreements, the Iranian fiber optic factory established in that country has recently been launched and has started its production." Hashemi added that Iranian knowledge-based companies have also become active in Venezuela's communications infrastructure. The Iranian fiber optic factory in Venezuela was launched with a \$10 million investment. Designed to address Venezuela's domestic demand, the plant also aims to position itself as a regional export hub for telecommunications equipment across Latin America.

### Pakistan's market offering Iran 'unparalleled' export opportunity: Diplomat

Economy Desk

An experienced diplomat in economic, trade, and investment affairs with Pakistan stated that the country, with a population exceeding 240 million and a young demographic profile, offers Iran's South Khorasan Province an unparalleled opportunity to expand exports as one of the region's largest markets. Zahra Qadianlou, speaking at the specialized online meeting "Trade Relations with Pakistan: Opportunities, Requirements, and Solutions" at the South Khorasan Foreign Ministry representative office on Wednesday, noted that the diversity of exportable products — from food industries to agricultural and petrochemical goods — combined with geographical proximity and transportation facilities, creates potential for expanding trade relations and attracting joint investments for South Khorasan, IRNA reported. "The presence of advanced technologies from East and West in Pakistan has given the country a special position in the region's political, economic, and geographical affairs," the diplomat emphasized. Highlighting the positive Iran-Pakistan relationship, which makes the two countries' markets complementary, Qadianlou explained, "Iran is primarily an importer of raw materials and essential goods like sugar, rice, and meat, while Pakistan is a producer of many agricultural products, including mangoes and bananas, which are less commonly found in Iran." She reported that Pakistan's economic growth reached 2.6% this year, driven by loan settlements and extensive investments, adding that the



country's economic and investment situation has progressed significantly over the past two years. Referring to recent Iran-Pakistan agreements on fresh meat imports, Qadianlou stated, "The entry of Pakistani fresh meat into the Iranian market via Karachi port and rapid transportation via refrigerated trucks has enabled the supply of this product to meet Iranian market needs." She further noted that proposals have been made to Iran's Agriculture Ministry to shift focus towards importing agricultural products from Pakistan — due to proximity and high quality — instead of longer routes like Latin America. "Although Pakistan's market offers abundant opportunities for imports," Qadianlou clarified, "overall, the country possesses significant potential for exports and economic cooperation with regional nations, including Iran."

**Imports from Iran**  
Qadianlou detailed the neighboring country's diverse imports from Iran, including palm oil, legumes, tea imported from Kenya, spices, milk and dairy products (including whey pow-

der and industrial powdered milk), as well as dried fruits and nuts such as almonds and pistachios. Regarding imported petroleum products, she said, "Pakistan primarily imports crude oil, but liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is a major Iranian export to Pakistan, with over one hundred trucks carrying this product dispatched daily." The county also imports raw cotton, synthetic silk yarn, and synthetic fibers. In petrochemicals, their main imports include plastic granules and pharmaceutical raw materials. Chemical fertilizers are imported annually through tenders, in which Iran participates indirectly via Oman. Qadianlou acknowledged Pakistan's infrastructural challenges, "High energy prices, especially petrol priced at nearly USD 1 per liter, have led to limitations for energy-intensive industries, making operations economically unviable for many companies." "Nevertheless," she concluded, "over 100 Pakistani companies have invested in the Chabahar Free Zone in petrochemicals, food industries, and agricultural processing, demonstrating a serious commitment to developing economic cooperation between the two countries."



# Israel's role in border terror incidents clear: *Former envoy*

## Terrorism 'ominous gift' foreign powers passed on to Pakistan



Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (front-L) walks alongside Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, who headed a high-ranking delegation during his trip to Pakistan, in Islamabad on August 3, 2025.

president.ir



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staffwriter

### INTERVIEW

With Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's two-day visit to Pakistan, marked by the signing of 12 cooperation documents and meetings with top officials, a major step was taken toward stepping up Tehran-Islamabad

relations.

This official trip, carried out at the invitation of the Pakistani government and accompanied by a high-ranking delegation of Iranian officials and senior experts, saw both sides reach agreements in tourism, agriculture, judicial and legal cooperation, industry, science and technology, transportation and transit, cultural heritage, and economic and commercial cooperation.

Pezeshkian's visit to Pakistan was, in fact, in response to Islamabad's strong backing of Tehran during the imposed 12-day war and its condemnation of the Zionist regime's aggression against Iran. During the Zionist regime's assault on Iran, Pakistan's parliament stated it would step up to the plate to defend Iran's territorial integrity and support its government and people if necessary.

Moreover, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, during Pezeshkian's recent visit, laid out his country's clear support for Iran's rights, especially against the Zionist regime's aggression and Iran's peaceful nuclear program. He stressed that under the UN Charter, Iran has the full right to go down the path of peaceful nuclear use, and Pakistan stands behind this legitimate right.

Masoud Pezeshkian, while emphasizing the importance of ramping up trade exchanges between the two countries to \$10 billion, called for the swift implementation of economic agreements reached.

Regarding the outcomes and achievements of the president's visit to Pakistan, Iran Daily spoke with Mashallah Shakeri, former Iranian ambassador to Pakistan and expert on Pakistani affairs. The text of the interview follows:

**IRAN DAILY:** How do you assess the Iranian president's recent visit to Pakistan and its significance?

**SHAKERI:** In my view, this trip was a very timely and crucial move in expanding relations with our neighbors. It's important because Pakistan is one of our powerful neighbors, home to 250 million Muslims. Pakistan holds significant power factors on the international stage. Last month, as the rotating president of the UN Security Council, Pakistan, alongside China and Russia, laid the groundwork for a UN resolution condemning the Zionist regime and US attacks on our country. At every level — intellectuals, academics, leaders, and the public — Pakistan rose as one voice to support us and the Resistance movement. You could say it showed the best support of Iran among neighbors and other countries during the war. Therefore, Mr. Pezeshkian's visit can be seen as a gesture of gratitude to this good neighbor as well as a move to cement ties between the two nations through the signing of 12 agreements exchanged between officials. This visit effectively opened up a new chapter in bilateral relations, paving the way for further development and strengthening of the ties between Iran and Pakistan as friendly neighbors.

Although there have been historical border tensions linked to terrorist group activities, as you mentioned, Pakistan showed the highest support for Iran during the imposed 12-day conflict among all countries. What do you think explains this?

Pakistan shares an identity bond with us that simply cannot be torn apart. The path of Islamic civilization ran through

Iran to Pakistan. Our relations are not recent but deeply rooted and longstanding. Although border incidents have occasionally stirred the pot and caused some friction, they have not negatively affected the overall good relationship.

In truth, the relations carry the weight of centuries of history. Iran is essentially the cradle of Islamic civilization, and Pakistan recognizes Persian as the mother tongue of Urdu. In other words, our cultural and ideological common ground with Pakistan is very strong and well-established. So, the occasional minor border clashes, although painful, should be seen in context as Pakistan's border with Afghanistan faces similar issues; Such problems are not unique to us.

Terrorism in Pakistan is a dark legacy foisted on the country by foreign powers, combined with some past political missteps that allowed terrorism to take root, causing attacks like those we see. However, within the state, society, intellectuals, and media, Pakistan looks at Iran positively — as a strong, historic, glorious, and respectable neighbor. We have always stood by and appreciated Pakistan's supportive stance toward Iran across various levels.

You pointed out the deep cultural, religious, and ideological ties between the two countries. Why then have diplomatic and cooperative relations not kept pace with this depth across different fields? Yes, there are many untapped potentials for cooperation that remain underutilized. As you said, the two countries boast profound and deep-rooted cultural ties and people-to-people connections, but in areas like economic cooperation, scientific



Mashallah Shakeri

and technological exchange, and road and transport networks, we have yet to capitalize on the existing capacities. I believe unlocking these potentials requires ramping up diplomatic visits and leveraging the private sectors' capabilities, alongside formal agreements between Tehran and Islamabad. Some groundwork has been laid, but it needs to speed up.

Currently, our trade exceeds \$3 billion, which means Pakistan is already a good economic partner. But we must keep in mind that Pakistan's political landscape is sometimes influenced by outside powers and

cross-border governments that, through threats or incentives, try to sway decision-making. Another factor is Pakistan's frequent political changes and instability, which occasionally lead to shifts in policy and hamper consistent government stances. These factors cause breaks and disruptions in Pakistan's approach.

Therefore, addressing bilateral relations requires considering these realities. Yet, the most crucial factor remains the shared neighborhood and border — an unchanging, rock-solid element in relations. Geography doesn't change, so neighbors remain neighbors forever, and we must keep doubling down on advancing neighborly policy and building up our connections and links.

**Given the positive relations between Iran and Pakistan,**

**can't they step up their cooperation in the military field and even carry out joint military exercises?**

Absolutely, why not? This recent visit of Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh, Iran's minister of defense, as part of the president's delegation, and his meeting with Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Pakistan's defense minister, clearly point to a genuine will between the two countries in this area. Moreover, last year, the late Major General Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Armed Forces, led a high-ranking military delegation to Islamabad, and Pakistani military commanders visited Iran alongside Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif over the past two or three months. Although sometimes the military cooperation flies under the radar in the media, signs



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (front-R) pays tribute to Muhammad Iqbal, the Pakistani poet who wrote extensively in both Urdu and Persian, in Lahore, Pakistan, on August 2, 2025.

president.ir



Iran's cultural and ideological common ground with Pakistan is very strong and well-established. So, the occasional minor border clashes, although painful, should be seen in context as Pakistan's border with Afghanistan faces similar issues; Such problems are not unique to us.



of this intention exist at the military leadership level of both countries. We hope to see these collaborations deepened and taken all the way to practical and operational phases.

**Regarding border tensions and problems, is it possible for the two countries to hammer out a solution so that such incidents no longer show up and sour the relations?**

I strongly feel that the Zionist regime's evil hand is behind these incidents. Their agents can sneak into even remote areas of Pakistan, manipulating poverty and ignorance among

some misguided elements to set off conspiracies. Problems like these, rooted in Zionist meddling, are not limited to the Iran-Pakistan border but can surface along other borders with neighbors as well. Both countries' officials have now owned up to this reality and acknowledged the issue. Therefore, the relevant agencies in both countries must step up to the plate and put measures in place to nip this malignant tumor in the bud.

I should also flag another point: Pakistan itself has been hit hard by terrorism in 2024, suffering about 1,600 terrorist operations within its own borders,

resulting in over 2,500 deaths. Pakistan is thus a victim of terrorism on its own soil, and its capacity to control self-serving terrorists who operate in its far-flung areas is limited. We must wrap our heads around this fact. Tehran and Islamabad have come to grips with the understanding that terrorism knows no borders. If someone starts a fire in your neighbor's house, the smoke will affect all the neighboring homes. Therefore, Tehran, Islamabad, and Kabul must join forces to combat terrorism and come up with appropriate plans.

**Is the goal of reaching \$10**

**billion in trade exchanges between Iran and Pakistan, mentioned during the president's recent trip, achievable?**

If the necessary political and legal will and support are in place and bilateral efforts keep up the momentum, I believe hitting \$10 billion in the next few years is definitely within reach. Let me just point out one thing: Pakistan has a contract for gas supply via pipeline from Iran that remains intact. They can currently receive up to 30 million cubic meters of gas daily from Iran, and just this one commodity alone could push our trade volume close to that \$10 billion target annually. More-

over, expanding other connections such as rail, road links, and maritime exchanges through the two important ports — Chabahar in Iran and Gwadar in Pakistan — could set up massive commercial traffic between the countries. This expansion would benefit bilateral ties as well as the broader region, including China on Pakistan's eastern flank, which would also cash in on these transport and trade developments.

**Do you think the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline will ultimately be put into operation?**

Iran's commitment to getting

this pipeline up and running is clear and unwavering. Iran has shown resolve both in execution and in financing the project. The pipeline has already been laid down up to the vicinity of the Pakistani border. However, Pakistan faces two hurdles on its end: First, financing its segment of the pipeline implementation, which I view as manageable since the necessary funds can be sourced from various places, and second, the looming shadow of threats from powers uneasy about this connection. These actors have put the brakes on Islamabad, intimidating them and holding up progress on the pipeline.

# Iran deals at risk without sanctions relief

## PERSPECTIVE

The focus of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to Pakistan, which wrapped up on Sunday, was trade and security, and the challenge before Tehran and Islamabad remains translating the many deals and MoUs signed during the talks into concrete agreements. This is mainly so because of the poor relations between the US and Iran, particularly the former's sanctions that threaten any state wishing to expand ties with Tehran. The visit is significant as it comes after the June Iran-Israel war, in which the US also participated, and at a time when geopolitical alliances are shifting rapidly.

Dr. Pezeshkian and his delegation met the top civilian and military leaders of the country. Among the matters discussed was the bloodbath in Gaza; The Iranian leader also appreciated Pakistan's support during the Israeli aggression.

Dr. Pezeshkian expressed his desire to raise bilateral trade to \$10b, while the need to jointly combat terrorism, especially along the border in Balochistan, was also discussed. The Iranians further sought to join Pakistan and China in expanding regional trade as part of the Silk Road initiative. At least 12 MoUs and deals were signed covering various sectors. Of course, the elephant in the room is US sanctions; Unless both sides



Workers stand around waiting at a section of a gas pipeline linking Iran and Pakistan after the project was launched during a ceremony in the southern Iranian port of Chahbahar on March 11, 2013.

● ATTA KENARE/AFP

address this irritant, it will be difficult to achieve the economic goals both Pakistan and Iran desire.

Perhaps the biggest casualty of foreign sanctions has been the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline; Tehran has completed the project at its end, while Pakistan is wary of finalising the scheme lest it attract Washington's wrath.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif promised an "early resolution"

to the pipeline issue when he was in Iran in May, but the issue did not come up during the Iranian president's visit, at least not publicly. It appears that Pakistan is willing to import petroleum from the US in order to satisfy the Trump administration, and is not willing to import Iranian gas for fear of annoying the US. Unless the pipeline imbroglio is settled amicably, without fear of foreign pressure, Pakistan may

have to fight an ugly arbitration battle, which will harm ties with Iran.

Along with trade, militant groups reportedly active on both sides of the border must be neutralised so that they are unable to damage ties. In 2024, due to the malign activities of armed non-state actors, both capitals traded missile fire; Thankfully, the issue was resolved before things could escalate.

But it serves as a reminder of how militant groups can create highly volatile situations. Pakistan indeed must walk a tightrope between Washington and Tehran. But while we must maintain good ties with the US, it is essential to have cordial relations with a neighbour with whom we share a long border and a long history.

*The article first appeared in Dawn.*



It appears that Pakistan is willing to import petroleum from the US in order to satisfy the Trump administration, and is not willing to import Iranian gas for fear of annoying the US. Unless the pipeline imbroglio is settled amicably, without fear of foreign pressure, Pakistan may have to fight an ugly arbitration battle, which will harm ties with Iran.

# Ferry launch eases Iran-Pakistan travel

## PERSPECTIVE

The Maritime Affairs Ministry's launch of Pakistan's first-ever ferry service linking the country with Iran and the Persian Gulf states is a long-overdue and highly practical step. It raises the obvious question: Why wasn't this done earlier? Not only does the new sea route bypass the increasingly dangerous land passage through Balochistan — frequently targeted by BLA militants — it also revives a crucial mode of transport for low-income travellers, particularly pilgrims heading to Iraq and Iran, who had been left stranded after land routes were shut down.

The restoration of access for these citizens is significant.

With the sea corridor now open, the government has a vital opportunity to encourage private ferry operators to offer safe, affordable, and comfortable services. If done right, this can transform the ferry sector into a dependable travel alternative for thousands of people, especially those for whom air travel remains out of reach.

The strategic maritime route through the Strait of Hormuz — one of the world's most heavily trafficked waterways — adds another layer of promise. Besides supporting pilgrimages, this link could stimulate trade and strengthen cultural and religious ties with neighbouring nations. Affordable, accessible, and safe travel is a gateway to deeper people-to-people con-

nections — something air travel has historically limited to elites, business travellers, and government functionaries.

While large-scale regional integration remains a distant goal, small but targeted initiatives such as this ferry service offer a clear and achievable path forward. The government must now build on this momentum, offering tax incentives and other support to ensure the sustainability of the service and encourage wider adoption. In a region where movement is often restricted by conflict, class, or cost, this is a welcome and commendable policy shift.

*The article first appeared in The Nation.*



Pakistan's Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry (front-R) and Iran's Minister for Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq (front-L) pose for pictures after signing a bilateral agreement in Islamabad, Pakistan, on August 3, 2025.

● GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN



## Wrestling World Championships:

## Qasempour eager to excel in new weight class

## Sports Desk

Iranian freestyle wrestler Kamran Qasempour will aim for yet another successful campaign at the World Championships as he embarks on a new chapter in his career at September's showcase event in Zagreb.

Qasempour once dominated the 92kg category by claiming back-to-back world titles in 2021 and 2022, before injury setbacks and division switches hindered the Iranian in recent years.

A groin problem prevented the Iranian from defending his title at the 2023 Wrestling Worlds. Upon his return to action, Qasempour took a shot at the country's 97kg slot for last summer's Paris Olympics but ultimately finished behind compatriot Amir-Ali Azarpira in the pecking order and missed the trip to the French capital.

He returned to his favorite 92kg class for last year's World Championships – dedicated to four



Iranian freestyle wrestler Kamran Qasempour (L) is seen in action in a training session in Tehran on July 26, 2025.

● IAWF

non-Olympic weight categories – but the event in Tirana turned out to be one

to forget for the Iranian. Qasempour marched to the semifinals without con-

ceding a single point, and looked set for a place in the final showpiece when he

took a 3-1 lead against Russian sensation Abdulrashid Sadulaev.

However, with five seconds remaining, the two-time Olympic champion snapped the Iranian down, spun behind, and then managed to fling him to the mat for a four-point takedown to pull off a 5-3 comeback victory.

Qasempour barely recovered from the last-four heartbreak and suffered a 6-2 loss to American David Taylor – a familiar figure for Iranian fans due to his long-standing rivalry with Hassan Yazdani – leaving Tirana empty-handed.

On his return to the Albanian capital in March, Qasempour grabbed the 92kg gold in emphatic fashion to find some consolation, though it was his last piece of action in his favorite territory.

With three-time Olympic medalist Yazdani set to compete in the 97kg class once he fully recovers from a shoulder injury, the national team coaching staff convinced Qasempour to move to the 86kg category in what will likely be the 28-year-old's last genuine

tilt at Olympic glory in Los Angeles 2028.

Qasempour was ruled out of May's International Takhti Cup in Isfahan – serving as part of the Iranian world trials – due to an untimely COVID-19 infection on the eve of the competition. However, he was given a second chance by the national governing body of the sport to earn a place in Zagreb in a domestic head-to-head showdown against teenage prodigy Abolfazl Rahmani – which Qasempour won 3-1 to punch his ticket for the Croatian capital.

Looking impressive and in fine form at the national team training camp in recent weeks, Qasempour is keen to secure a third world gold in September, with Iranian fans eager to see him in a likely encounter against Olympic champion Magomed Ramazanov – after the Russian-born Bulgarian capitalized on Yazdani's injury to beat the Iranian great in the final in Paris.

## Indian ambassador welcomes Iranians' presence in Pro Kabaddi League

## Sports Desk

Rudra Gaurav Shresth, the Indian ambassador to Tehran, praised the increasing number of Iranian players in Pro Kabaddi League in his home country.

"The collaboration between Iran and India in kabaddi has been highly successful on the global stage in recent years. The sport is the second most popular one in my country after cricket and boasts a huge fan base. In this context, the presence of Iranian players is a significant development for the Indian league," the Indian ambassador said in meet-

ing with 20 Iranian players in Tehran before they head to India for the new league season.

"The number of Iranian players in Indian league has grown significantly in recent years, rising from just two to 20 today," added the Indian diplomat.

"The Iranians have earned widespread praise for their performances, with Mohammadreza Shadlouei becoming the most expensive kabaddi player in the world, while Fazel Atrachali has consistently ranked among the league's top players in recent seasons.

"I've been collaborating with the Iranian Sports Ministry across

multiple sporting disciplines. Currently, we are working to introduce Zorkhaneh (a traditional Persian sport) in India. We've also expanded bilateral exchanges in chess, and rowing,

"The successful partnership we've built in kabaddi could serve as a model for cooperation in other traditional sports. There's also great potential for collaboration in football and cricket; I know cricket is particularly popular in southern Iran. Indian football has been making strides, and we've benefited from the expertise of top Iranian coaches," added the Indian envoy.



Rudra Gaurav Shresth (2nd R - first row), the Indian ambassador to Tehran, poses for a photo with the Iranian players of Indian Pro Kabaddi League during a meeting in Tehran, Iran, on August 6, 2025.

● IRAN DAILY

## Esteghlal closing in on ex-Real keeper Adán

## Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Esteghlal is on the verge of signing former Real Madrid goalkeeper Antonio Adán.

The 38-year-old Spaniard arrived in Tehran on Tuesday ahead of the medical tests and signing the contract with the Capital Blues, which will make him the eighth summer recruitment for the club. Adán has been without a team since parting ways with Sporting CP at the end of the 2023/24 season – after keeping 68 clean sheets in 156 games for the Portuguese giant, lifting the Primeira Liga twice.

An academy product at Real Madrid, Adán made



● GETTY IMAGES

his senior debut for Los Blancos in 2009, though his contribution was limited to 18 appearances across all competitions before he left for Serie A club Cagliari midway through 2013/14 season.

On his return to Spanish football, Adán joined Real Betis, registering 54 clean

sheets in 165 outings for Andalusian club, before spending two seasons at Atlético Madrid as a second-choice keeper.

A new number one has been a top priority for Portuguese head coach Ricardo Sa Pinto since he returned to the Esteghlal bench last month, af-

ter long-serving skipper Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini failed to agree a new deal with the Blues and left for fellow top-flight club Sepahan.

A dreadful campaign saw Esteghlal finish ninth in the 16-team table of the Iranian top division last season, though it still managed to win the Hazfi Cup trophy in May and secure a place in the upcoming AFC Champions League Two campaign.

Esteghlal has already signed Esmaeil Qolizadeh, Amirmohammad Razaqinia, Hossein Goudarzi, Aref Aqasi, Uzbek center-back Rustamjon Ashurmatov, Albanian winger Jansir Asani, as well as former Malavan goalkeeper Habib Farabbasi.

## Porto great Jorge Costa dies aged 53 after cardiac arrest

**REUTERS** – Former Porto captain Jorge Costa died on Tuesday at the age of 53 after suffering a cardiac arrest at the club's training centre, the Portuguese side said. The former defender, who was serving as Porto's Director of Professional Football in his second season in the role, was rushed to hospital but could not be saved. "Throughout his life, both on and off the pitch, Jorge Costa embodied the values that define FC Porto: dedication, leader-

ship, passion and an unshakeable spirit of conquest," the club said in a statement. "He left his mark on generations of fans and became a symbol of Portismo."

Over his career, Costa played 530 games in all competitions - 383 for Porto and 50 for Portugal's national team.

Costa earned the nickname "Bicho" (Animal) from teammate Fernando Couto during their partnership in central defence. As captain, he led Porto to UEFA Cup glory in 2003 and a Champions League triumph in 2004 under manager Jose Mourinho.

The defender was one of six players to win five consecutive Portuguese league championships with Porto, alongside Aloisio, Drulovic, Paulinho Santos, Rui Barros and Folha.

Costa returned to the club in April 2024 as director under new president Andre Villas-Boas.

"Jorge Costa's legacy will always remain alive in the memory of all Porto fans. You will never be forgotten, Captain," the club added.



● REUTERS



# Qeshm Geopark connects scientific research with tourism growth

## Iranica Desk

Today, the concept of geoparks is a primary approach to tourism development in many advanced countries as well as in countries with limited natural resources or those whose industries and related production sectors are weak.

Geoparks are managed areas that include geological sites and natural, social, cultural, and historical resources, incorporating three key principles: conservation and sustainable utilization of Earth's resources, education, and sustainable economic development. These three principles are also considered essential pillars in the definition of geoparks as important frameworks in land management, IRNA wrote.

Utilizing the natural capacity and geological heritage of underdeveloped and deprived areas, especially villages and less industrialized towns, to alleviate deprivation, create development incentives, and achieve the goals outlined in the country's 20-year vision document, is among the main objectives of geoparks. Paying attention to this matter is highly important in land use planning discussions.

Moreover, by diversifying tourism activities in deprived and less developed regions, it is possible to create employment opportunities, reduce poverty, and establish relative welfare in these small population centers. A revision of tourism policies by planners and decision-makers to invigorate tourism and attract tourists with diverse goals and interests to the country is a key point connecting land use planning and the geopark concept.

Designating an area as a geopark is a key strategy for reducing regional and territorial imbalances and achieving its comprehensive development. It is an essential and unavoidable necessity as one of the fundamental pillars of land use planning aimed at mitigating inequalities between villages, deprived areas, and cities in terms of opportunities, resources, and benefits.

## Sustainable development goals

Balancing population distribution and activities in accordance with environmental capacity and various natural and divine resources at the regional level, enhancing the role of nature-based tourism in the national economy through utilization of the country's natural, historical, and cultural heritage capacities, creating economic balance between deprived areas and metropolitan cities, and the principled and optimal conservation and use of capital, natural resources, and wealth in low-income and less industrialized regions, as well as developing regional geotourism — all contribute to outcomes of establishing a geopark within a territory and organizing the space for optimal utilization under the framework of national interests. The result is sustainable development and the creation of social, economic, and cultural welfare.



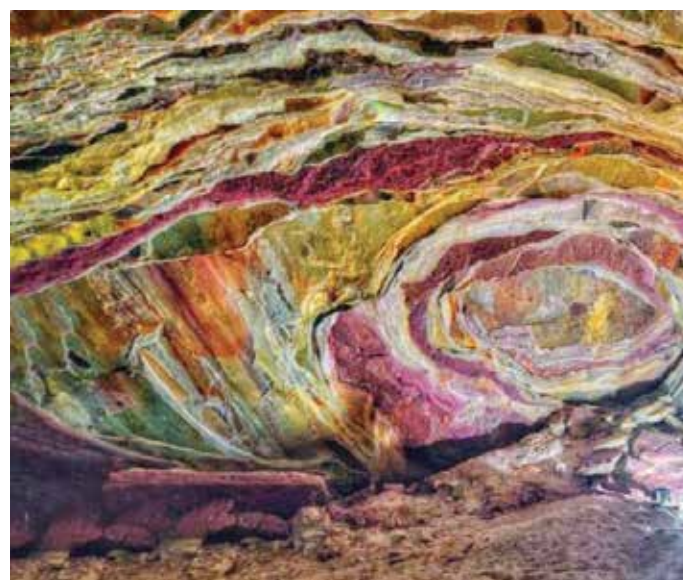
Therefore, it can be said that a geopark, by making optimal use of a region's natural capabilities and environmental potential, serves as a complementary strategy for regional development. It can be considered a reliable step toward the advancement and development of rural areas and local communities across all economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions.

## A pioneer in Iran

Qeshm Geopark is one of the earliest geoparks registered under the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network, established in 2006 with an area of approximately 300 square kilometers in part of Qeshm Island. Today, this geopark covers the entirety of Qeshm and Hengam islands, spanning an area of 2,063 square kilometers, making it one of the largest geoparks in the world.

Within this global geopark, diverse geological, natural, and cultural attractions are utilized for tourism as well as scientific and educational purposes through various designated geosites. These geosites are actively protected according to the conservation strategies and management of Qeshm Geopark.

The distance from Qeshm city to Bandar Abbas is 22 kilometers, and the shortest distance between Qeshm Island and the mainland is 1,800 meters. Qeshm Geopark is the first in the country where special attention is given to the preservation of natural geological and cultural heritage through the cooperation and participation of the local community. Within this geopark, various interpretive and explanatory tools are used to introduce geological phenomena and processes to tourists while promoting and



● respina24.ir

developing the local economy through geotourism.

## Major geosites

The geopark's 38 geosites encompass geological, natural, and cultural attractions, each representing in some way the history of the formation and evolution of Qeshm Island. The most prominent geosite is the Salt Dome and Namakdan Cave Complex, considered a rare geological phenomenon worldwide and holding the title of the longest salt cave in the world. Additionally, the Hara Mangrove Forest geosite, which holds two important designations as a "Biosphere Reserve" and "Protected Area," not only boasts striking natural beauty but also notable geological features that enhance its significance. This geosite has both biological and geological value, with its sedimentology being particularly important.

## Ongoing research

At Qeshm Global Geopark, ongoing research programs and continuous studies aim to increase the number of geosites and further develop the geopark, making the island a well-known destination for researchers, university professors, and graduate students.

## Local assistants

With the support of the geopark management, a network of trained "local assistants" provides services such as guiding tours, accommodating tourists, offering local cuisine, and selling handicrafts and local products. These services are delivered according to standards and frameworks established by the geopark management for the assistants.

## Accommodations

Using local accommodations offers tourists a unique oppor-

tunity to experience pristine and traditional environments and live among local people. This has greatly contributed to employment and economic prosperity in the Qeshm local community, employing a significant portion of the active workforce.

## Community training

Conducting training courses for local guides, selecting and approving geopark assistants, and establishing local restaurants and accommodations are among the important steps taken to benefit the local community and ensure tourist satisfaction in this global geopark. Additionally, the creation of "Geo-products" (products related to the geopark) is another notable and effective initiative of Qeshm Global Geopark. This effort supports souvenir packaging, empowers local communities, and helps revive the indigenous culture of the Persian Gulf.

## Natural symbols

The use of natural symbols in local products has also provided a platform for local people to generate income and to introduce the culture of Qeshm — an island with a rich global and civilizational heritage — to visitors and tourists.

## Regional significance

Qeshm Geopark holds special significance due to its location in the strategic region of the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, because it is situated between the geoparks of East Asia and Europe, it has gained a distinctive position in the region and among geoparks worldwide. It has been recognized as the regional development center for UNESCO Global Geoparks in the Middle East and North Africa.

The presence of prominent geological features, including the Salt Dome and Namakdan Cave, stunning valleys, pristine and beautiful beaches, and wildlife in the western part of Qeshm Island, along with the Hara Mangrove Forests, Chahkooh Canyon, Aali Canyon, Bam-e Qeshm, Valley of Statues, the historical and cultural Kalat Koshtaran Site, Naz Island, and dozens of other erosional, geomorphological, and rock formations with beautiful shapes, led to Qeshm's inclusion on the UNESCO List of Global Geoparks.

The Hara forests, along with unique biodiversity, the Dolphin Bay, coral beaches, and the sandy strip of Nakh Kenar, are other natural landscapes that have further enhanced the value of Qeshm Geopark.

## Cultural and historical sites

In addition to these natural attractions, the Geopark Museum, the Guran Park Museum, the English Cemetery, and the historic port of Laft are among other valuable assets of Qeshm Geopark. However, these alone are not enough; what truly gives a geopark its identity is the active participation and involvement of the local community in the geopark's promotional, developmental, conservation, and management programs.



# 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.