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Lebanon's Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem gives a televised speech from an unknown location in this screengrab obtained from video released on August 15, 2025.

REUTERS



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Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (front 2nd R) addresses a meeting of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)'s prime ministers in Cholpon Ata, Kyrgyzstan on August 15, 2025.

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Round the clock relief for millions of pilgrims

Khuzestan Red Crescent stands strong in Arbaeen service

By Hassan Aboudi Mazraei
Head of Iranian ICS in Khuzestan Province

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Iranian Red Crescent Society in Khuzestan Province doubled both its relief personnel and operational bases this year to serve millions of pilgrims crossing from the province into Iraq during the Arbaeen pilgrimage. Arbaeen, a major Shia Muslim event commemorating the 40th day after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH), draws millions annually to the holy city of Karbala in Iraq. Coinciding with the mass movement of pilgrims through Khuzestan's border crossings, the province's Red Crescent boosted its manpower and logistics capacity by 100% compared with last year, enabling it to provide stronger relief and medical support. Deploying 925 professional rescuers, the society launched its Arbaeen operations on July 26 (Safar 1), setting up two frontline operational bases at the Chazabeh zero-point border and the Shalamcheh Martyrs' Memorial area.

During the days leading up to Arbaeen, more than three million pilgrims crossed into Iraq from Khuzestan's land borders, with relief workers on round-the-clock duty. The border teams shouldered heavy workloads to keep the flow of assistance uninterrupted. In total, the Red Crescent operated two border rescue stations at Shalamcheh and Chazabeh, 15 roadside relief posts on routes leading to the borders, 24 intercity operational bases, and three medical centers inside Iraq along the approaches to the frontier. Operations relied on 216 ambulances, supported by vehicle carriers, forklifts, and trailers stationed along the routes to clear obstacles and aid vehicles in distress. Two helicopters were also deployed for aerial support of rescue and relief missions. For improved service to female pilgrims, more than 200 trained women rescuers were stationed along the approach roads to both borders. These teams delivered a range of educational, cultural, logistical, medical, and support services.

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is seen in an interview with national television in the Iraqi city of Karbala on August 14, 2025.
● IRNA

International Desk

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Iran is actively collaborating with China and Russia to prevent the reactivation of UN sanctions through the so-called "snapback" mechanism threatened by European countries.

"We are working with China and Russia to stop it," Araghchi told national television late on Thursday. "If this does not work and they apply it, we have tools

to respond. We will discuss them in due course."

The snapback mechanism, embedded in the 2015 nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), allows the automatic reinstatement of UN Security Council sanctions that had been lifted under the agreement. Iran, however, disputes the legitimacy of the European powers' efforts to trigger the provision.

Araghchi explained that although

the term "snapback" does not explicitly appear in the JCPOA text, its mechanism is clearly established and has even been invoked by Iran itself in response to the US withdrawal from the deal in 2018.

"We used the snapback mechanism ourselves," Araghchi said. "When the United States left the JCPOA and reimposed sanctions unilaterally, we started to reduce our commitments in phases, eventually returning to pre-agreement conditions."

Iran's return to higher levels of uranium enrichment — including to 20% and then 60% enrichment — was enabled by preserving its nuclear infrastructure intact during the JCPOA years.

"The infrastructure was maintained so that when we decided to restart enrichment at higher levels, it took less than 24 hours," he noted.

Regarding the European powers' attempt to reimpose sanctions, Araghchi emphasized that their legal authority to trigger snapback is highly questionable under international law.

He said the European countries' recent statements demanding

"zero enrichment" violate the terms of the JCPOA, effectively amounting to a rejection of the deal.

"When they say 'zero enrichment,' they no longer accept the JCPOA framework and therefore cannot claim the rights granted to members of the deal, including the right to activate snapback," Araghchi said.

The UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorses the JCPOA and contains the snapback clause, is set to expire on October 18, 2025. Iran has warned that beyond this date, the snapback mechanism will no longer be available.

On Wednesday, foreign ministers from the E3 group — Britain, France and Germany — once again threatened to do so in a joint letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council.

In the letter, the E3 group said they were "committed to us(ing) all diplomatic tools at our disposal to ensure Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon."

In a detailed letter to the UN Security Council, Iran has laid out its position, asserting that Brit-

ain, France, and Germany are no longer legitimate JCPOA participants with the authority to reinstate sanctions through snapback. This position is supported by China and Russia, who share Tehran's view on the matter.

China and Russia's backing plays a critical role in Iran's diplomatic efforts to counter the snapback threat. Both countries are permanent members of the UN Security Council and have veto power over resolutions, including those related to Iran's nuclear program.

"We have been holding repeated technical and legal discussions with China and Russia over the years about the snapback mechanism," Araghchi said. "Their support is crucial in this ongoing legal and political dispute with the European countries."

China 'opposes' European move

China "opposes invoking" sanctions and "believes that it does not help parties build trust and bridge differences and is not conducive to the diplomatic effort for the early resumption of talks," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin

Jian said in a statement on Friday. "Any moves taken by the Security Council now should help reach new agreements in talks, instead of the opposite," China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin added.

'Cooperation with IAEA requires new framework'

Araghchi also said the relationship between Tehran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has fundamentally changed following attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities, and future cooperation must be based on a new framework.

"The reality is that after this attack, changes have occurred. Our nuclear facilities were attacked and suffered damage. The IAEA first needs to tell us what the inspection protocol is for a bombed nuclear site. There is no such protocol because there is no precedent," he said.

"When you want to inspect a bombed facility, you have to clarify who will clear the rubble, how to approach the site, and what the threats are. There are dangers from unexploded ordnance and radiation, and the IAEA must have a protocol for that."

Netanyahu's comments on 'Greater Israel' infuriate Arab world

International Desk

Arab nations slammed recent comments by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apparently expressing support for the idea of an expanded "Greater Israel", calling the remarks a threat to their sovereignty at an especially tense time for the region.

The term Greater Israel refers to a biblical interpretation of the nation's territory during the time of King Solomon, encompassing not only the present-day Palestinian territories of Gaza and the occupied West Bank, but also parts of modern Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Ultra-nationalist Israelis have called for these territories to be occupied. Asked on Tuesday by i24NEWS interviewer Sharon Gal if he subscribed to such a "vision" for a Greater Israel, Netanyahu said "absolutely", adding, "If you ask me what I think, we're there."

He then pivoted to a comment about the founding of Israel and the "great mission" of ensuring its continued existence.

Israel's neighbor Jordan on Wednesday condemned the prime minister's Greater Israel remarks as a "dangerous and provocative escalation" and "a threat to the sovereignty of states."

A spokesman for its foreign ministry went on to reject what he called Netanyahu's "inflammatory" rhetoric and "delusional claims."

Egypt also said on Wednesday that it had "requested clarification on this matter," characterizing it as tantamount to a "rejection of the option of peace in the region."

Netanyahu's remarks come in the midst of a 22-month war between Israel and the Palestinian resistance group Hamas in the Gaza Strip that has repeatedly spilled over into the wider Middle East and provoked



frequent condemnation of Israel from across the Arab world.

On Thursday, Iraq's Foreign Ministry condemned the comments, saying they revealed Israel's "expansionist ambitions" and were "a clear provocation to the sovereignty of countries."

Gaza mediator Qatar also decried Netanyahu's statements calling them "absurd" and "inflammatory."

Palestinian state

The allusion to an expanded Israel also comes as far-right members of Netanyahu's cabinet demand the conquest of Gaza and annexation of the West Bank, where the cabinet recently approved a rash of new settlements considered illegal under international law.

Saudi Arabia on Wednesday voiced "its total rejection of the ideas and plans for colonization and expansion adopted by the Israeli occupation authorities," reiterating "the historical and legal right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state."

In February, Netanyahu in a television interview provoked an outcry from Arab countries after he suggested a Palestinian state could be

established on Saudi land.

In Tuesday's sit-down, the premier also revived calls to "allow" Palestinians to leave Gaza, telling Israeli broadcaster i24NEWS that "we are not pushing them out, but we are allowing them to leave."

Pakistan on Friday also condemned recent remarks by Netanyahu and Israel's finance minister Bezalel Smotrich "calling the statements a violation of international law and an attempt to forcibly displace Palestinians from Gaza."

Smotrich also has announced plans to expand settlement building in the occupied West Bank to "bury the idea of a Palestinian state."

"Pakistan strongly condemns and rejects recent statements made by the Israeli Occupying power, alluding to the creation of so-called 'Greater Israel,' and its designs aimed at the forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza," the Foreign Office said in a statement.

The ministry said the remarks showed Israel's intent to cement its occupation and disregard peace efforts, urging the international community to act swiftly to halt further regional destabilization and end crimes against Palestinians.

Hezbollah warns of civil war in Lebanon if gov't insists on disarmament bid

Sheikh Qassem affirms 'resistance will not surrender its weapons'

International Desk

Hezbollah chief Sheikh Naim Qassem on Friday accused Lebanon's government of "handing" the country to Israel by pushing for the popular resistance group's disarmament, saying that the government is implementing an American-Israeli order, even if it leads to civil war.

Under US pressure the Lebanese government has ordered the army to devise a plan to disarm the resistance group by the end of the year after Lebanese group reached a cease-fire agreement with Israel to end a conflict with the regime, which began following Israel's war on Gaza in October 2023. "The government is implementing an American-Israeli order to end the resistance, even if it leads to civil war and internal strife," Sheikh Qassem said. "The resistance will not surrender its weapons while aggression continues, occupation persists, and we will fight it... if necessary to confront this American-Israeli project no matter the cost," he said. Qassem urged the government "not to hand over the country to an insatiable Israeli aggressor or an American tyrant with limitless greed."



Sheikh Naim Qassem

He also said the government would "bear responsibility for any internal explosion and any destruction of Lebanon", accusing it of "leading the country to ruin."

Hezbollah and its ally Amal would not be organizing any street protests at this time, he said, while threatening to do so in future.

His comments came two days after a visit by Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani to Lebanon, where he met Sheikh Qassem as well as President Joseph Aoun. The Iranian official assured the movement that the Islamic Republic would consistently stand beside them, stressing that the country did not interfere in the domestic affairs of other nations, but would never abandon its support for the resistance front.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



VP reiterates Iran's opposition to foreign meddling in regional geopolitics

Aref: EAEU needs collective resilience against future shocks

Economy Desk

Iranian first vice president, in a meeting with the Russian prime minister in Kyrgyzstan on Friday, reaffirmed Tehran's strategic policy of opposing foreign interference in the region's geopolitics.

Also addressing the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Prime Ministers' Summit in Cholpon-Ata, Mohammad Reza Aref welcomed the Free Trade Agreement between Iran and the union, highlighting its potential to boost sustainable development, deepen economic ties, and build collective resilience against future shocks such as energy and food insecurity, climate change, and emerging technological threats, IRNA reported.

In his meeting with Mikhail Mishustin on the sidelines of the summit on Friday, Aref highlighted the importance of strengthening bilateral relations in regional affairs, announcing that Iran is fully prepared to expand bilateral, multilateral, and regional cooperation with Russia, as reported by fvpresident.ir. He stressed that, like Russia, Iran opposes US unilateralism in the world, and that a strategy of multilateralism, regional security, and stability should be pursued with the help of regional countries.

Referring to developments in the Caucasus, he stated that Iran welcomes any agreement and cooperation aimed at de-escalation and fostering friendly and close relations among regional and neighboring countries. However, he emphasized that Iran's strategic policy is non-interference by foreign countries and forces, particularly in the geopol-

Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (2nd R) poses for a photo with prime ministers of Eurasian Economic Union member states on the sidelines of the EAEU Summit in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, on August 15, 2025.
● fvpresident.ir

itics of the region, as regional issues do not require foreign presence and all countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia can live together in peace, stability, and security.

The remarks came a week after Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a peace treaty in Washington aimed at ending nearly four decades of conflict. Reports indicated that a US private consortium would oversee the Zangezur corridor along Iran's border, a development that has drawn Tehran's close attention.

The vice president added that the scope of Tehran-Moscow cooperation goes beyond current capacities, but certain bureaucratic issues have slowed the process. He said cooperation should be pursued within the framework of a comprehensive strategic plan, especially in the fields of energy, tourism, transportation, rail, and transit corridors.

Strategic corridor

The Russian prime minister, for his part, described the North-South Corridor as a strategic highway, saying this international route will ensure the entire Eurasian region's connection to global markets. He noted that transport logistics for the North-South Corridor are actively being developed.

The intergovernmental agreement to



establish the International North-South Multimodal Corridor was signed in 2000 by Russia, India, and Iran, aimed at transporting cargo from India, Iran, and other Persian Gulf states through Russian territory to Europe. Later, the number of member states increased to 14. Compared to the maritime route via the Suez Canal, this corridor reduces transport time and costs by more than half.

Addressing the summit on Friday, Aref, expressing satisfaction over the Free Trade Agreement between Iran and

the Eurasian Economic Union now in effect, said the agreement will create exceptional opportunities for national economies, sustainable development, and deepening economic cooperation. The vice president noted that Iranian economic actors are increasingly aware of the benefits and potential of the Eurasian Economic Union agreement and are determined to enhance cooperation and participation in the union's supply and value chains. He stressed that new areas of cooperation should be put on the agenda.

Iran, he said, is ready to expand cooperation in other key areas such as trade and energy, modern technologies, commerce, and transportation alongside the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement.

The first vice president emphasized that collective resilience is needed against future shocks — shocks such as energy insecurity, food insecurity, climate change, and threats stemming from new technologies, including the growing risks posed by monopolies in global financial and banking systems.

Russia negotiating construction of small modular NPPs with Iran: Rosatom



Rosatom CEO Alexey Likhachev
● VLADIMIR GERDO/TASS

Russia is holding talks with Iran on the construction of small modular nuclear power plants (NPP) on its territory, hoping to enter into relevant agreements in the future, Rosatom Chief Executive Officer Alexey Likhachev said in an interview with the Rosiya-1 TV channel.

In early 2025, Iran suggested that the agenda of

cooperation in nuclear energy with Russia be expanded by adding the construction of small modular nuclear power plants in the Islamic Republic to the discussion, he noted, TASS reported.

"Such negotiations are underway. I hope that sooner or later such agreements will be concluded," the chief executive said.

Russia has always been an active participant in the process of resolving the issues on Iranian nuclear activities, he stressed, adding that as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was formed and launched Moscow played a key role in providing technical and diplomatic support to Tehran.

In 2015, Iran and the world powers signed a landmark nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which imposed restrictions on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for partial relief from international sanctions. The three European signatories, Russia, France, the UK, along with China and Russia, are the only remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal after the US withdrawal in 2018.

EAEU ready to expand trade with Iran beyond Free Trade Agreement

Economy Desk

The Eurasian Economic Commission's trade minister, in a meeting with Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mohammad Atabak, expressed the Eurasian Economic Union's readiness to expand trade with the Islamic Republic and described the prospects for bilateral cooperation as broad and extending beyond the current Free Trade Agreement.

During a meeting with Atabak on the sidelines of the 43rd session of the Eurasian intergovernmental council on Friday, Andrey Slepnev stressed that the Free Trade Agreement between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Islamic Republic "is not merely a free trade agreement, but a

qualitatively new level of engagement."

The Free Trade Agreement was signed between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Islamic Republic on May 14.

The Eurasian Economic Commission's trade chief added, "We see prospects for expanding cooperation in key sectors and increasing the volume of mutual trade."

According to the report, Slepnev and Atabak reviewed the initial outcomes of the Free Trade Agreement's implementation since May 14, 2025, and outlined plans to deepen bilateral cooperation. The two sides announced readiness to hold the first joint committee meeting between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Eurasian Eco-



Eurasian Economic Commission's Minister of Trade Andrey Slepnev (1st R) meets Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mohammad Atabak (2nd L) on the sidelines of the EAEU Summit in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, on August 14, 2025.
● IRNA

nomical Union, scheduled for this autumn. According to Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Bakytzhan Sagintayev, the roadmap for the free trade agreement is scheduled for approval during the joint committee meeting in September.

At the Friday meeting, it was agreed that specific mechanisms for implementing the Free Trade Agreement will be adopted in the upcoming

session.

According to Slepnev, the draft roadmap for trade and economic cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and Iran is in the final stages of approval.

Armenia to complete power transmission line to Iran in short time frame

Economy Desk

The Armenian government announced plans to complete the construction of an overhead power transmission line to Iran in a short period of time.

According to ISNA, Yerevan has decided to finish the 400-kilovolt Iran-Armenia overhead transmission line and its related substation as soon as possible.

Citing Arka News Agency, the report said the project will increase electricity exchange capacity between Armenia and Iran from 350 megawatts to 1,200 megawatts.

In addition, the project will enable full utilization of the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline's capacity under the "gas-for-electricity" scheme.

In late April, Iranian Ambassador to Arme-

nia Mehdi Sobhani visited the 400-kilovolt substation for the third Iran-Armenia power transmission line in Noravan and expressed hope that the line would be operational within the next few months.

The Iran-Armenia gas pipeline is a 140-kilometer pipeline that enables Iran to export natural gas to Armenia. The pipeline's Iranian section is 100 kilometers long, stretching from Tabriz to the Armenian

border, playing a significant role in energy ties between the two countries.

On November 21, 2024, the Armenian government approved an energy project to construct a new 400 kV power transmission line to Iran.

The project is also intended to support the development of the North-South Energy Corridor, which aims to connect the power grids of Iran, Armenia, Georgia, and Russia.



● IRNA

Reformist Front's head gives good grade to gov't

No negotiation back then means no cohesion now

INTERVIEW

During the wartime, we witnessed an exceptionally strong national cohesion among Iranians, which experts cite as a key factor behind Iran's power and victory against the Zionist regime and the United States. Ms. Azar Mansouri, as the head of Iran's Reformist Front and secretary-general of the Union of Islamic Iran People Party, what's your take on how this national cohesion came about and the ways to preserve and strengthen it?

MANSOURI: I firmly believe that alongside defensive capability, the most crucial deterrent was our national cohesion and the unwavering solidarity of all patriots against the aggression of the Zionist regime. This assault had long been planned out, and if the effective elements that managed to bring this 12-day war to a cease-fire get overlooked or covered up by governance negligence, this opportunity might have backfired into a serious threat.

I can say with certainty that if Iran hadn't sat down at the negotiation table and proven its interactive approach to the world, this vindication wouldn't have come about, and the national cohesion we witness today wouldn't have taken shape. Facing an assaulting power, which had deluded itself after Iran's state media, top government sessions, highest-ranking military commanders, and scientists were targeted — generating fears of the continuation of assassinations — the country would have been hit by street protests if Iran hadn't maintained an engaging stance against sanctions and hostilities. Without this stance, the situation would have looked entirely different.

Many say, "Now, we negotiated. What good came out of it?" We did negotiate, and that negotiation, that interactive approach, vindicated us among all Iranian citizens who understand that we went for dialogue, that we are not belligerent but tolerant and peaceful, and that we were never and will never be the instigators of any war. Thus, when diplomacy takes center stage in our foreign policy, it strengthens patriotism in Iranian society. How could a country be attacked right in the midst of ongoing talks? This is a serious and noteworthy matter.

In my view, another major factor is Iran's history and civilizational background. We are not a country with a 100 or 200-year history; We boast one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Since the formation of the earliest states on this planet, Iran has always been at the forefront of dialogue and a pioneer of intercultural conversations.

Throughout the ups and downs in this land's history, a prevailing and enduring sentiment has taken hold among our people. Regardless of government behavior, this dominant feeling is



of a profound commitment to this land and soil. We come and go, governments come and go, but this land must stand firm; Iran must remain in its place. Because any piece of this land lost due to incompetence, negligence, or lack of national unity has never under any circumstances come back. This national sentiment and attachment to the soil have bred unparalleled national solidarity among Iranians. The enemy repeatedly called out for people to hit the streets and riot. They had devised a scheme, assuming that because Iranians live under economic pressure and their livelihoods shrink day by day, they could play the savior role and, with a few attacks, set the stage to target influential institutions and shake the foundations of the regime.

In my opinion, the government handled things very shrewdly here. By making a timely ap-

pearance on the scene, it didn't let parts of the plan designed to spark riots play out. Regarding livelihood and public provisions, efforts were made during the trips over those 12 days to properly manage the supply and demand in the market, so provinces wouldn't face shortages or difficulties.

On the other hand, the measures and arrangements swiftly put in place following the martyrdom of our military commanders showed that an integrated body — including the Islamic Establishment, the government, political institutions, parties, activists, and civil society — came together under one banner called "the Nation," standing firm against this 12-day aggression and unequal war without prior preparation.

We're approaching the one-year mark of Mr. Pezeshkian's

government. From the day he entered the election arena, "national unity" was his chief slogan. Despite emphasizing unity, some actions and rhetoric, like the talk of "the president's political incompetence," end up playing into the hands of the enemies, and such discussions aren't appropriate in the current situation. How do you assess this state of affairs?

Mr. Pezeshkian rightly said during his campaign that we didn't come to quarrel and kept insisting that we must join hands, assess the country's political status, and then agree on solutions. To me, this perspective, put forth by the president himself, is entirely reformist and peacebuilding.

Despite the president's viewpoint, an interpretation among Mr. Pezeshkian's political rivals took root that meant: If the

president acts according to our wishes, that's unity; If he goes against our desires, that's division and the opposite of unity. But real unity should come into being where it helps bridge the existing gaps between the Islamic Establishment and the people. Today, we're up against enormous shortages in energy, water, electricity, and gas sectors. When such an issue exists, strengthening and expanding solar panels can patch up some problems, but the heart of the matter is that the heavy shadow of sanctions must be lifted from Iran. Which sanctioned country can right the ship of its economy?

If sanctions are to be lifted, unity must be hammered out around the fact that we are currently in neither war nor peace, but in a period where diplomats' full capacity must be tapped to push the shadow of war away from the country.

The approach that for years insisted on calling UN Security Council sanctions "scraps of paper" and at one point torched the JCPOA, preventing us from properly benefiting from it, must now be thrown out. Is there a better deal than the JCPOA? If so, let them speak up. If they say "no negotiations," then what solution do they offer Iran?

The truth is, the majority of global public opinion — in America, Europe, and non-Muslim countries — strongly condemns the Zionist regime's crimes in Gaza. Societies that no one expected have kicked up a fuss with "pots and pans protests" over the imposed starvation in Gaza. This highlights the depth of the tragedy and genocide; Truly, no words suffice to describe these crimes.

In such a scenario, those societies pressure their governments.



Reformist candidate for Iran's June 28 presidential election, Masoud Pezeshkian (c), clenching his fist in a campaign meeting in Tehran, Iran, on June 23, 2024.

● VAHID SALEMI/AP



Despite the president's viewpoint, an interpretation among Mr. Pezeshkian's political rivals took root that meant: If the president acts according to our wishes, that's unity; If he goes against our desires, that's division and the opposite of unity. But real unity should come into being where it helps bridge the existing gaps between the Islamic Establishment and the people.



Azar Mansouri, the head of Iran's Reformist Front and secretary-general of the Union of Islamic Iran People Party, gives an interview to IRNA on August 1, 2025.

● IRNA

For example, we saw France announce it recognizes Palestine, but the real power to make that decision lies with the ruling elites in those countries. Alongside official diplomacy, we must run with public diplomacy as well. We've also told Mr. Pezeshkian that the crimes of the Zionist regime during this 12-day war against the Iranian people — from Evin Prison to Tajrish Square, hospitals, residential homes, and innocent civilians, including pregnant women and children — are hugely important on their own rights, but the place that can lift the shadow of sanctions off us is diplomacy and negotiation. Therefore, all forces loyal to Iran must back the negotiation. We have no path other than negotiation. Of course, resistance is not denied where appropriate and feasible, but now is the time for diplomacy.

A criticism aimed at your group is that you mean total surrender or merely going to the negotiation table. Absolutely not.

So, you believe we must uphold our conditions and positions while simultaneously negotiating?

Exactly. About 20 years ago, in 2005, a vision document was drafted. One of its clauses stated Iran should become the top regional power by 2025; This goal was based on constructive engagement with the world and dialogue framed by three principles: dignity, wisdom, and expediency. This is precisely the concept President Pezeshkian advances today. But why did the governments after the Reform era brush aside this pathway? After all, the name of an Iranian president had been recorded as the pioneer of the dialogue of civilizations.

The Vision Document was also part of the general policies of the Islamic Establishment.

Exactly. This issue had been signed off on by the Leader of the Revolution and the Expediency Council, and governments were tasked with implementing it. Everyone had permitted it, but the previous government ditched it. The document's approach was the very strategy that could have catapulted us to be the leading country in the region, not where we are now in eighth or ninth place economically. We were supposed to be the number one economy in the region, but the plans were not carried out by the Ahmadinejad governments as well. If there's talk of unity in foreign policy now, then that unity must be hammered out around solutions. The bottom line is: If the establishment bodies reach an agreement on solutions, then these negotiations should carry on. This is where the government's cooperation with the current broader policy becomes clear. On the domestic front, many of the existing rifts must be addressed and patched up through unity. Do you think these gaps are being mended satisfactorily? All the factors causing dissatisfaction, anger, and even hatred toward the structure must be rooted out, and the state broadcaster should turn itself around to regain its national standing so people will tune back in. When we talk about a soft war,



where does this come into play? When we say the state broadcaster must assume the position of a national media, it means its role must be boosted to reduce citizens' drift toward foreign media. Without this function, it acts against the country's national interests. Why is FATF held up? This is where unity comes into focus. If Mr. Pezeshkian's success is the Islamic Establishment's success, and his failure is the Islamic Establishment's failure — this is a statement by the Leader — then all obstacles blocking this government on economic and livelihood issues must be cleared out. So why is there a delay? When we talk about unity, this is precisely where it must take root. I also said during the elections that under these circumstances, anyone from the reformists who becomes a presidential candidate aware of the country's situation has sacrificed themselves. Despite all pressures, Mr. Pezeshkian has stood his ground and is striving and negotiating. I am certain if anyone else but Mr. Pezeshkian had been president during this 12-day conflict — I mean his electoral rivals — they wouldn't have been able to keep the country afloat in the same way. Now, the reward for this sound management is cooperation with the government to bridge gaps. We must iron out sanc-

tions issues and resolve problems in economic and trade exchanges with the world. Therefore, the FATF issue must be sorted out as soon as possible, and negotiations to lift sanctions must move forward. Even during the war, I wrote that we must push forward to isolate the Zionist regime and its main backers. Of course, it's true we face numerous sanctions, but the "snapback" mechanism also lends legitimacy to these sanctions, and new sanctions keep popping up against our country. Is this in Iran's national interest? Now, the diplomatic apparatus and government must be strengthened so society feels the ruling system is pulling out all the stops to meet the people's demands. At the same time, serious criticisms are directed at some government members and ministers.

How successful do you think Mr. Pezeshkian has been in achieving his goals and plans? Mr. Pezeshkian said he's not one for conflict and must form a cabinet that is a symbol of eschewing quarrels. Naturally, this means some considerations had to be taken into account in forming the cabinet. If we look at the one-year track record of some ministries, not only is there no improvement, but in some

cases, the previous trends have been maintained or even gone downhill. A clear example is the Ministry of Energy. Given the energy and water supply situation, the primary responsibility rests with the Ministry of Energy, which should have managed the situation to prevent shortages from getting out of hand. For example, power cuts for a dairy factory lasting three hours cause irreparable damage that only the producer truly understands. Power cuts in hospitals carry similar consequences. This issue is not just about water shortages; The industry, food production, and other businesses are also affected. The Ministry of Energy plays a decisive role in these shortages, which extend beyond resources and energy supply to affect all sectors. Thus, this ministry faces serious criticism. In some provinces, especially during elections, expectations were raised, and government representatives and governors were picked in ways that not only didn't meet these expectations but sometimes were perceived as opposing them. But if I were to sum up the overall performance of Mr. President after one year, I would give him a passing grade because he has pulled out all the stops, dedicates his time fully, and is truly open to engagement, with no

goal other than serving the nation. Perhaps Mr. Pezeshkian is one of the few presidents who has not set his sights on a second term; Had that been the case, he might have taken other routes. Therefore, I firmly believe Mr. Pezeshkian's government holds a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Iranian establishment.

Fair to say that the government has faced severe challenges during this period. What happened this year could have knocked any administration off course.

When someone takes responsibility under such conditions, it's an opportunity for the Islamic Establishment, and we must seize this opportunity. I'm not saying it's the only opportunity, but it's probably one of the few opportunities to revive governance and fix those behaviors that have turned our governance into something undesirable. These reforms must be carried out by this government. Therefore, a competent cabinet must be formed, and the government must be able to pick its own team. What sense does it make that parliament members intervene to this extent in appointments?

The full interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



People hold Iranian flags and rally after Friday Prayers at Enqelab Street, Tehran, Iran, on June 13, 2025, hours after Israel's brutal, unlawful attack against Iran.
● TAHEREH BABAEI/IQNA



I am certain if anyone else but Mr. Pezeshkian had been president during this 12-day conflict — I mean his electoral rivals — they wouldn't have been able to keep the country afloat in the same way. Now, the reward for this sound management is cooperation with the government to bridge gaps. We must iron out sanctions issues and resolve problems in economic and trade exchanges with the world. Therefore, the FATF issue must be sorted out as soon as possible, and negotiations to lift sanctions must move forward.



An Iranian lawmaker puts a Keffiyeh on the shoulders of President Masoud Pezeshkian (front-C) before the latter's address to the Parliament in Tehran, Iran, on June 16, 2025, during Israel's imposed 12-day war against the country.
● KHABARONLINE

FIBA Asia Cup:

Resolute Iran to continue
Jeddah journey against Australia

Sports Desk

A place in the final showpiece of the FIBA Asia Cup will be up for grabs when Iran and two-time defending champion Australia go head-to-head at Jeddah's King Abdullah Sports City today.

Chasing a fourth Asian title, and first since 2013, Iran pulled off an epic fightback in the quarterfinals, overcoming a 21-point deficit to edge Chinese Taipei 78-75 on Wednesday – the biggest comeback by any team in this year's competition.

Mohammad Amini stole the show with 30 points and 11 rebounds while Sina Vahedi added 21 points – including 19 in the second half – and two triples in a display of grit and poise as Greek head coach Sotirios Manolopoulos's men celebrated a fourth successive win in Jeddah, having beaten Guam, Japan, and Syria for a top-spot finish in Group B.

Lin Ting-Chien paced Chinese Taipei with 22 points, with the Hinton brothers and Chen Ying-Chun chipping in timely bursts that had them in full control for most of the night. Chinese Taipei came out firing, opening with a 10-0 burst behind Hinton's triple and Lin's fearless drives. By the end of the first quarter, Lin had nailed back-to-back corner threes to put his team up 24-11, and Mohammad Al Bacher Gadiaga's hot shooting in the second frame helped preserve a commanding 42-26 halftime advantage.

"I believe when we were not mak-



Iranian guard Sina Vahedi (3) goes for a layup during a last-eight victory over the Chinese Taipei in the FIBA Asia Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on August 13, 2025.

● FIBA

to concede a defeat since making its Asia Cup debut in 2017.

Spearheaded by star forward Jaylin Galloway and Owen Foxwell, who had 15 points apiece, Australia dismantled the Philippines 84-60 earlier on Wednesday to book a last-four date with Iran.

The defending champions wasted no time asserting control, hitting seven triples in the opening quarter alone to build a commanding 29-12 lead. Galloway set the early tone with three makes from deep, while Jack McVeigh and Will Magnay chipped in with key plays at both ends.

Australia has been in its own league in Jeddah, making a clean sweep of wins in arguably the toughest group in the preliminary round, which also featured 2022 finalist Lebanon, two-time champion South Korea, and Qatar.

Today's game will mark a second Asia Cup encounter between Iran and Australia after the Boomers defeated Team Melli (79-56) in the 2017 final in Lebanon.

The other last-four clash will see China – the most decorated team in the competition with 16 titles – face New Zealand, which is desperate for a maiden final berth, after back-to-back semifinal defeats against Australia.

ing shots, that bothered our mind and mentality," Manolopoulos said after the game. "At halftime, we had a long talk, and we changed the approach. We had to start from defense, to play aggressively possession by possession. We

knew we will get our shots, and this time, we will make out shots. For the second half, we played to our maximum."

Vahedi, meanwhile, said he was "proud of everybody – coaches, players" after Iran claimed a third

comeback victory in a row in Jeddah.

"Man, I don't know what to say about that because I'm so mad about it. I was on the bench for the whole first half," said the 24-year-old, adding: "I was pa-

tient on the bench, thinking about defense, offense, everything. And in the second half, we won the game. I'm so happy about that."

The scale of today's task, however, is incomparable to what Iran has faced in Jeddah, as Australia is yet

Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League champion will host Al Sadd on the first matchday of the upcoming AFC Champions League Elite season – starting with the league stage across the West and East regions on September 15.

The draw for the league phase of the Asian elite clubs' competition took place at the AFC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur on Friday, where Tractor avoided the Saudi Prwo League heavyweights in the West's 12-team table.

A second successive home game will see Tractor welcome Iraqi champion Al Shorta on Matchday Two (Sept. 29-Oct.1), before Dragan Skocic's men visit Dubai to play Shabab Al Ahli, which has three Iranians in Sardar Azmoun, Saeid Ezzatollahi, and Reza Ghandipour in its ranks, in the third round of fixtures on October 20-22.

Tractor will then play PFC Nasaf in Qarshi, Uzbekistan, before returning home to take on Qatar Stars League's Al Duhail, which defeated Iran's Sepahan 3-2 at home in the

playoffs on Tuesday, for Matchday Five in late November.

A final home game for the north-west Iranian club will come against Emirati outfit Al Wahda, followed by back-to-back trips to the UAE's Sharjah FC and Al Gharafa of Qatar.

The league stage will conclude in mid-February next year, with the top eight in each of the 12-team tables in the west and east zones progressing to the round of 16 – scheduled for March 2-11, 2026. This will be followed by a centralized Finals that sees all matches from the quarterfinals onwards being staged in Saudi Arabia between April 17 and 25, 2026.

ACL Two draw

Earlier on Friday, 32 teams were divided into eight groups across the West and East regions in the AFC Champions League Two draw, as Iranian clubs Esteghlal and Sepahan learned their fate at the continent's second-tier club competition.

Esteghlal, which finished ninth in the Iranian top-flight table last

term but still managed to secure Asian club football thanks to a domestic cup title in May, was drawn in Group A alongside Al Wasl – fourth in the Emirati league last season – Jordanian Pro League runner-up Al Wehdad and Bahraini champion Al Muharraq SC. Meanwhile, Sepahan – runner-up to Tractor in the Iranian league – was pitted against Mohun Bagan Super Giant of India, and Turkmenistan's Ahal FC, as well as Al Hussein of Jordan – in a repeat of last year's group encounters – in Group C.

Cristiano Ronaldo's star-studded Al Nassr headlines Group D – also featuring Al Zawraa of Iraq, Istiklol of Tajikistan, and India's FC Goa.

The top two in each group will advance to the last 16.

The group stage is scheduled to conclude on December 24 before moving into the round of 16 between February 10-19, 2026. The quarterfinals and semifinals are set for March 3-12 and April 7-15 respectively, with the final showpiece to be staged on May 16, 2026.

AFC Champions League Elite:

Tractor avoids Saudi giants,
to host Al Sadd in league stage opener

● RASOUL SHOJAEI/IRNA



● REUTERS

Coman close to Al Nassr move, says Bayern

REUTERS – Bayern Munich winger Kingsley Coman is close to joining Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr, with talks in the final stages, the German champions said on Friday ahead of today's German SuperCup at VfB Stuttgart. They said, however, there was no development in the ongoing transfer saga of Stuttgart forward Nick Woltemade.

The 29-year-old Coman, a 2022 World Cup finalist with France, has been at

Bayern for a decade, having won a slew of domestic and international titles, including the Champions League and the Club World Cup.

"There are still final talks pending, so it is not a done deal just yet," Bayern sports director Christoph Freund told a press conference. "But should it go ahead, then he was here 10 years, he won many titles, and was a super person."

For coach Vincent Kompany, Coman's

imminent departure may be emotional, coming shortly after club talisman Thomas Mueller's move to the Major League Soccer (MLS) side Vancouver Whitecaps after 25 years at Bayern, but his team was focused on the season start.

"I think that King showed over the years at Bayern what player he was. When such a successful player leaves the club, it is always emotional," Kompany said.

Revitalize summer with Golestan’s natural wonders

Iranica Desk

With the arrival of mid-summer and the steady rise in temperatures across most parts of the country, many people begin searching for destinations where they can escape the sweltering, oppressive heat and unwind in a cool and peaceful natural setting. Golestan Province, with its extraordinary biodiversity and pleasant, moderate climate, is located in the northeast of Iran and is widely recognized as one of the country’s most popular and well-loved tourist destinations. Boasting the ancient Hyrcanian forests — listed as a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site — along with abundant waterfalls, lush summer pastures, and stunning natural landscapes, Golestan offers a rare and exceptional opportunity for those seeking to experience a truly different kind of summer holiday, chnair wrote.

Alangdareh forest

Alangdareh Forest, one of the crown jewels among the natural attractions of Golestan, lies just outside the city of Gorgan. Towering trees and winding pathways weave together to form an immersive environment that feels as though it belongs in a fairy tale. Strolling deep into this enchanting forest, hearing the soothing melodies of songbirds and the gentle babble of crystal-clear streams, is an unforgettable experience that can provide a welcome reprieve from the scorching heat of summer. The cool breeze drifting through the canopy and the invigorating freshness of the air not only revive the spirit but also help re-



Alangdareh Forest
● safarmarket.com



Naharkhoran Forest Park
● pinorest.com

store both mental and physical well-being for every visitor who ventures into its heart.

Kaboudwall Waterfall

Kaboudwall Waterfall, standing proudly as the tallest waterfall in Golestan Province, is located near the town of Aliabad Katul. With a drop of more than 20 meters, it presents a majestic sight complemented by the powerful, resonant roar of cascading water. Beyond its breathtaking beauty, the surrounding fresh and cool air makes it an ideal location for summer picnics and a perfect

refuge from the noise and chaos of urban life. Owing to its untouched, pristine surroundings, Kaboudwall Waterfall is considered a paradise for nature lovers, offering them the chance to spend an unhurried, serene day amidst unspoiled nature.

Naharkhoran Forest Park

Naharkhoran Forest Park, located in the city of Gorgan, is another beloved hotspot for summer visitors. This expansive park is well-equipped with amenities, including traditional eateries, numerous walking and hiking



Kaboudwall Waterfall
● irangard.com



Ziarat village
● kojaro.com

trails, and broad swaths of lush greenery, making it a superb choice for families and travelers alike to spend leisurely, enjoyable hours. The pleasant climate, combined with the sheltering shade of towering trees, creates a haven from the summer sun, attracting thousands of visitors every year.

Ziarat village

Ziarat village, a charming and refreshingly cool highland retreat situated near Gorgan, is celebrated for its mineral springs, lush surroundings, and a variety

of hiking trails. This mountain village is especially appealing to those who seek tranquility and fresher, cooler air during the summer months. Every year, it welcomes waves of travelers eager to escape the stifling heat of urban areas, heading toward the highlands to create cherished memories amidst nature’s beauty. Beyond its serene landscapes, Ziarat Village offers visitors a chance to immerse themselves in the local culture, savor traditional cuisine, and learn about the customs and heritage of its residents.

A blend of rich culture and history

Golestan is far more than a land of natural wonders; it is also a living tapestry woven from the rich culture and deep history of its people, which blends seamlessly with the province’s scenic splendor to make any journey here even more rewarding. Spending a night in a traditional local home and indulging in authentic regional dishes, alongside exploring untouched landscapes, adds depth and authenticity to the travel experience, ensuring memories that will last for years. With such remarkable features, Golestan Province welcomes thousands of domestic and international visitors each year — all in search of cooler climates, revitalizing landscapes, and vibrant moments filled with joy and energy. Summer in Golestan is not just a season — it is an invitation to restore your spirit and reconnect with nature. Here, you can sit under the shade of ancient, towering trees, listen to the bubbling of nearby streams, and lose yourself in the harmonious chorus of birdsong, casting away the fatigue of everyday life. If you are planning to spend this summer in a cool, tranquil setting surrounded by natural beauty, there is no better choice than Golestan Province. All it takes is a bit of planning, packing your bags, and setting off toward this emerald jewel of northeastern Iran, where a summer of unique experiences and unforgettable memories awaits. Golestan is ready to embrace you warmly and welcome you into the heart of its untouched paradise.

Mostowfi House; a cultural oasis in Shushtar

Mostowfi House in Shushtar, Khuzestan Province, dates back to the Qajar dynasty. This complex includes a mosque, public bath, and bridge, all built under the orders of Mohammad Ali Mostowfi during the reign of Muzaffar-Al-Din Shah. The architect was Mohammad Taghi Memar. The complex also houses a museum, restaurant, handicrafts gallery, and photography studio. It has been designated as the official UNESCO center in Khuzestan Province. The traditional interior design, scenic view of the Shadorwan River, and authentic local cui-

sine make the monument one of Shushtar’s prime tourist destinations. The house is divided into two sections: Zananeh and Biruni, both offering views of the Shadorwan weir-dam and the Shatit River, a branch of the Karun River. The Biruni section consists of doorways, corridors, rooms surrounding a vestibule, while the Zananeh (women) section features a central courtyard, alcove, porch, reception rooms (divided into summer and winter areas), and windcatchers. The structure is primarily built from clay brick, and stucco.

The main doorway is located on the west side of the complex and leads to the central courtyard through a narrow corridor flanked by two rooms. The square-shaped courtyard is paved with rectangular bricks. On the eastern side of the mansion, there is an octagonal pool. Along this axis lies a pavilion and a smaller rounded pool. The pavilion is adorned with traditional Karbandi and Rasmibandi decorative techniques. Next to the eastern side of the mansion is a wide, flat porch supported by two octagonal columns, two half-columns, and

three barrel vaults. Some areas near the porch rise to two stories. The porch roof features three large windcatchers — the two on the sides are octagonal, while the central one is quadrilateral. The central windcatcher ventilates the porch, with the others providing airflow to the basement. On the northern side, the mansion borders a flat corridor measuring one meter in height and eight meters in width. This corridor connects the northwestern and southwestern sections of the complex and is supported by nine rounded brick columns.





Islamic culture binds Iran, Uzbekistan, says NLAI chief

Arts & Culture Desk

National Library and Archives of Iran Director Gholamreza Amirkhani said that "Islamic civilization" remains the enduring link between Iran and Uzbekistan, as Tehran inaugurated a new cultural "Uzbekistan Room" on its premises.

Amirkhani opened the space at the National Library in central Tehran in the presence of Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Iran, Fariddin Nasriyev, and virtually, Firdavs Fridunovich Abdukhalikov, head of Uzbekistan's Islamic Civilization Center, IQNA reported.

The room is stocked with books, manuscripts and historical sources on Uzbek and Islamic heritage.

The inauguration marks a tangible deepening of cultural diplomacy between Tehran and Tashkent. It draws on high-level political support and seeks to reinforce ties across academic, cultural and spiritual spheres despite geographical separation. It

also reflects both sides' recent efforts to translate diplomatic visits into enduring institutions.

Amirkhani recognized that centuries of shared history "transcend borders" even though Iran and Uzbekistan no longer share a common frontier.

He added that Uzbekistan's "enlightened" President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian both champion stronger ties with Central Asia at official levels. He said that Iran feels no "fundamental difference" between cities like Isfahan, Shiraz or Mashhad and Uzbekistan's Ferghana, Samarkand, Bukhara, Termez, and Khwarazm — all parts of a shared cultural geography.

Speaking online, Abdukhalikov said that a delegation from his center had visited Iran to advance cultural cooperation seeded by their presidents.

He said last year's joint international conference with Iranian scholars and ongoing collaboration with the Astan Quds Razavi Library paved the way for this "Uzbekistan Room," now



National Library and Archives of Iran Director Gholamreza Amirkhani (r) and Head of Uzbekistan's Islamic Civilization Center Firdavs Fridunovich Abdukhalikov pose for a photo during the opening of the Uzbekistan Room in Tehran, Iran, on August 15, 2025.

● NLAI

established in Iran's national library. He added he hoped that growing cultural exchanges would "solidify relations" further and invited Amirkhani to a future symposium in Uzbekistan. Scientific Secretary of Center of Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan Rustam Jabbarov said the new room opens "a fresh page in spiritual relations" between the two nations.

The new envoy described Iran and Uzbekistan as "friendly countries" and credited this inauguration as a result of the 2023 visit of the Uzbek president to Tehran.

He said bilateral trade reached over \$500 million in 2024 and pledged to boost it to more than \$2 billion in



coming years. He also noted that over 100 Uzbek businessmen have traveled to Iran,

tourism is rising with two flights per week, and cultural cooperation continues to expand.

London online auction features Iranian artists



Arts & Culture Desk

The Modern & Contemporary Middle Eastern Art online auction at Bonhams in London featured works by Iranian artists including Ebrahim Olfat, Sirak Melkonian, Marcos Grigorian, Y.Z. Kami, and Babak Kazemi. The auction concluded on August 14 with no confirmed sales

reported, according to public data from Bonhams and Art-Chart, ISNA reported.

The auction offered a diverse selection of Iranian art, such as Ebrahim Olfat calligraphic piece titled 'Love' — portraying a poem by Hafez and estimated at £3,000–£5,000.

Sirak Melkonian presented two untitled works and 'Palheva-

nan,' each carrying estimates of £8,000–£12,000. Marko Grigorian's 'Earthwork' and Y.Z. Kami's collage on paper 'Rumi' were offered with similar estimates of £8,000–£12,000 and £4,000–£6,000, respectively.

Also, five works by Babak Kazemi were listed, each estimated between £800 and £1,000. Despite the robust scope of the auction, no results for these lots have appeared in Bonhams' publicly available results or in aggregated auction summaries. Bonhams carried out the auction in London via its online platform, concluding at 12:00 BST on August 14, 2025, from its New Bond Street saleroom. The sale offered 45 works by 33 artists as part of the Modern & Contemporary Middle Eastern Art category—but notably, Art-Chart reports show that none of the artworks sold, with zero realized sales despite total estimates ranging from approximately £192,700 to £301,700.

Parliament pledges full support for tourism as foreign visitor numbers surge

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Parliament has committed to providing comprehensive backing for the country's tourism sector through enhanced cooperation between lawmakers, government officials and private industry leaders, Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said during a high-level meeting in Tehran.

The three-way partnership aims to boost Iran's position in the global travel market amid recovering visitor numbers that showed strong growth before regional conflicts disrupted the sector.

Mohseni-Bandpey told participants that foreign tourism jumped 16 percent in the Iranian year 1403 (March 2024–March 2025) compared to the previous year. The momentum picked up speed in the first month of 1404, with overseas arrivals climbing 5.48 percent over the same period last year.

"One of the most significant recent achievements has been strengthening tourism's role within the country's governance system and boosting our presence in international diplomacy," the deputy minister said at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The upward trend came to a halt during what officials termed the "12-day imposed war", referring to Israel's military operations in the region that led to widespread booking cancellations.

Ali Yazdikhah, deputy chairman of parliament's Cultural Committee, praised the ministry's five-year development plan covering cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts



sectors.

He called the ministry's achievements "outstanding and important" while expressing optimism about reaching set targets during the country's seventh development program. "Given that we're approaching the drafting of the 2026 budget, the Cultural Committee stands ready to support the tourism industry," Yazdikhah told the gathering.

The government has rolled out incentives for tourism facilities, offering special terms for hotels with physical completion rates above 50 percent and other tourism establishments exceeding 70 percent completion.

Mohseni-Bandpey highlighted meetings with top economic officials, including the finance minister, tax organization chief, social security insurance head and central bank deputy governor, as evidence of government-wide support for the sector.

The ministry plans to present ten priority issues to Parliament for resolution, creating what officials described as a "triangular synergy" between private sector organizations,



Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey (c) addresses government officials and private industry leaders during a meeting in Tehran on August 15, 2025.

● CHTN

the heritage ministry and Parliament.

Hormatollah Rafiei, Director General of the Association of Air Transport and Travel Agents of Iran (AATTAI), said private sector groups had processed refunds for reservations cancelled during the recent regional conflict. His organization pledged to work alongside the ministry toward achieving tourism development goals.

Industry representatives can now raise concerns freely with government officials, marking a shift toward greater public-private cooperation in the sector, Mohseni-Bandpey added. Parham Janfeshan, director-general of tourism oversight and services, outlined regular meetings with private associations representing tour guides, travel operators, hotels and eco-lodges. His department is working to streamline conditions for tourism businesses, he said.

Round the clock ...

A major operational highlight this year was the rollout of 54 vehicles—ambulances, off-road relief trucks, and field units—provided

by the Iranian Red Crescent Society and local resources to safeguard pilgrims' health.

Emergency medical posts were also set up outside the border, in Iraq's Sheib area near Chazabeh and in Shalamcheh, to enhance healthcare delivery. At the three Red Crescent medical centers, volunteer healthcare staff treated more than 14,500 patients for respiratory, cardiovas-

cular, gastrointestinal, renal, ocular, dermatological, trauma, and heat-related conditions. Prescribed medicines were dispensed free of charge.

In addition, 3,100 people received paramedical services, including ECG tests, oxygen therapy, IV infusions, suturing, and injections.

From the start of the mass pilgrimage until now, over 14,300 people have received rescue services at the Shalamcheh and Chazabeh borders and along the Tariq al-Hussein route. Since July 30, 310 people were treated on site, while 92 oth-



ers were transported by ambulance to medical facilities. Preventive health measures included blood pressure and blood sugar screenings for more than 13,900 pilgrims—10,250 at Shalamcheh and 3,650 at Chazabeh.