

# Minister calls for urgent action to protect cultural heritage

## Iranica Desk

The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said that the extensive destruction of Iran's historical sites during the recent US-Israeli attacks amounts to "a deliberate assault on Iran's civilizational identity," stressing that targeting cultural heritage reflects the collapse of the moral and legal norms governing international conflicts. Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri said in an interview with Al Jazeera that while explaining the extent of the damage caused during the recent US and Israeli attacks on Iran, he described these actions as "a target-

ed attack on the historical memory and national identity of Iranians". Referring to the damage inflicted on Golestan Palace — one of the most prominent sites listed as a World Heritage Site — he stated that what is now visible in this historical complex is the destruction of accumulated layers of history, culture, and the identity of a nation; layers that cannot be recreated within any restoration framework. Salehi-Amiri emphasized that even during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, a large part of the country's historical heritage had been protected from systematic destruction, adding, "What is happening today reflects

the complete collapse of the ethical norms and legal rules governing conflicts; a process that poses a serious threat not only to Iran, but to the entire global system for the protection of cultural heritage." He also pointed to the expanding scope of attacks on historic cities and said that in Isfahan, as one of the main centers of Islamic-Iranian civilization, prominent structures such as Chehel Sotoun Palace and the Jaame Mosque — one of the oldest mosques in the country — were targeted, an event that shows the crossing of all red lines in the protection of human heritage. Emphasizing the inherent limitations of restoration

processes, Salehi-Amiri added that restoration, however precise and scientific, can never restore the original authenticity of a monument. The loss of authentic materials means the removal of part of the material memory of history; every crack and every injury is a lasting wound on the body of a nation's cultural identity. He called for the immediate intervention of international institutions and said that, under the 1954 Hague Convention, any hostile action against cultural property is prohibited. However, the inaction of responsible institutions in the face of these destructions amounts to ignoring legal



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and ethical responsibilities toward the common heritage of humanity. He stressed the deep con-

nection between cultural identity and national resistance, stating that the destruction of buildings,

however painful, cannot undermine a nation's belief in and attachment to its land and history.

# Mazandaran among top Nowruz travel destinations



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The Director General of Roads Maintenance and Transport Organization of Mazandaran Province said that according to data collected from 118 traffic-counting systems, over 3.27 million vehicle movements were recorded in the province from March 15 to April 1, 2026. Mohsen Mohammadzadeh said the traffic statistics show that Mazandaran was among the provinces attracting the highest number of

Nowruz (Iranian New Year) trips, with more than 1.722 million vehicles entering the province, chn.ir reported. He added that the total daily traffic on the province's exit routes exceeded 1.55 million passages and said that, based on the balance of inbound and outbound traffic, a buildup of nearly 302,000 vehicles was recorded, marking a nine percent increase compared with the same period last year. He further stated that during this period, 84,825

passengers traveled from Mazandaran to other parts of the country. Speaking about passenger transportation, Mohammadzadeh said that, the ongoing wartime conditions in the country, demand for travel using public transport fleets was properly met within available capacity, and passenger movement was carried out in the best possible manner. Mohammadzadeh emphasized that, fortunately, good measures have been taken in the passen-

ger transportation sector, noting that 222 passenger transport companies are active in the province and provide the necessary services to travelers. Meanwhile, the Director General of Mazandaran Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization said that nearly 10 million people had visited the province's attractions since the beginning of Nowruz. He also announced the provision of free services at some major recreational areas and

the continuous presence of inspectors to ensure visitor satisfaction on Nature Day. Hossein Izadi said that on April 2, known as Nature Day, and in line with the governor's orders and emphasis, all inspectors and secretaries of the travel services headquarters across the province maintained a constant and active presence in recreational areas and accommodation centers to ensure that the people of Iran are welcomed properly and respectfully.

# US-Israeli war crimes ...

## Casualties among university students, school pupils

By the fourth week of the war, 71 university students from various provinces had lost their lives, with Tehran Province having the highest number of martyrs at 23. Furthermore, the mass killing of 170 schoolchildren and their teachers in the city of Minab in the early hours of the war is a clear example of a war crime and a crime against humanity. Due to wartime conditions in the country, the opportunity to provide precise statistics has not yet been available, and the number of martyrs and injured professors, teachers, university students, and school pupils is certainly much higher.

## Attacks on vital fuel infrastructure, environmental resources

Extensive and targeted attacks on fuel storage and transfer infrastructure in Shahr-e Rey, Tehran Province, Fardis-Karaj, and other areas, in addition to being covered by the protections of the 1949 Geneva Convention and its four Additional Protocols, and due to their environmental consequences, risk of pollution, and release of toxic substances, violate the provisions of the 1976 ENMOD Convention and pose a direct threat to the right of future generations to a healthy environment.

## Attack on Iranian frigate Dena

This vessel had departed for India on a friendly training mission before the war. This unarmed vessel was attacked by the US Navy on its return from India, resulting in the martyrdom of its 104 crew members. The president of the United States, with utmost cruelty, stated that when he asked his commanders why they did not capture them (who were unarmed), they replied that sinking the ship was more enjoyable.

## Call for action

These actions have occurred while international bodies responsible for maintaining peace and security, particularly the United Nations Security Council, has maintained an unforgivable silence. This silence is a dereliction of duty and a clear violation of international obligations. Therefore, in order to recall and demand the fulfillment of legal, ethical, and humanitarian commitments within the framework of international law, we request the following from the United Nations Security Council, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Committee of the Red Cross (overseeing the implementation of the Geneva Conventions), UNESCO, the United Nations General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council:

An explicit and transparent condemnation of the aggression by the governments of the United States and the Zionist regime against Iran, adoption of deterrent and punitive measures against the perpetrators of these aggressions, a decisive stance against the attack on the peaceful nuclear facilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, documentation and follow-up of the extensive violations of conventions, an immediate investigation into the destruction of historical sites and registered cultural heritage sites, convening an extraordinary session of the United Nations to condemn these crimes and present effective solutions to prevent their recurrence.

We also call on all religious, scientific, academic, and cultural institutions worldwide to unite their voices, condemning the barbaric aggressions against Iran by the United States and the child-killing Zionist regime, to stand against this violence, and not to allow the fundamental rights of humanity to be sacrificed for the greed of aggressive powers.

# War chessboard with snakes & ladders rules



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## OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In international politics and strategic conflict, the metaphor of "chess" has long shaped how we interpret power. Chess suggests pure rationality, calculation, anticipating the opponent and sacrificing lesser pieces to secure victory.

Yet the harsh and at times absurd reality of modern wars, especially in the Middle East and in recent tensions involving Iran and global powers, reveals a striking paradox. The players present themselves as seasoned chess masters, but the logic governing events is closer to the volatile rules of "snakes and ladders."

In chess, the rules are clear. Each piece moves in a defined way. But on a "chessboard of war ruled by snakes and ladders," just when a carefully planned move seems to bring victory within reach, everything can collapse. An unexpected sting, a sudden assassination or an abrupt diplomatic shift can send a player crashing from near the top back to the starting point.

## Dice that writes fate

In snakes and ladders, the decisive factor is the "dice," a symbol of chance and forces beyond control. On the battlefield, too, even the most detailed strategies by generals and think tanks can be derailed

by a random event. A human error in air defense, a sudden weather change or a minor intelligence leak can have an outsized impact, much like rolling the wrong number at a critical moment.

Many analysts believe that war involving Iran, Israel and the United States have moved beyond the reach of classical game theory. Each move on the chessboard now carries the risk of turning into a "ladder" for sudden progress or a "snake" for a deadly fall.

## Fragile ladders & hidden snakes

Ladders represent temporary alliances and tactical successes. When a state assumes it has advanced by securing a new capability or external backing, it is effectively climbing a ladder. But such gains are rarely stable. History shows that external support can quickly turn into a venomous snake overnight, biting from behind.

Recent years have shown how assassinations and surprise strikes can function as the longest snakes on the board. Their impact goes beyond the loss of a single asset. They can push an entire strategic position back to square one, forcing actors to rebuild confidence, authority, and deterrence from the ground up.

## Ambiguity in rules of game

The great tragedy is that actors insist they are playing chess. They speak of "strategic pa-

tiency," "doctrinal change" and "hybrid operations." These belong to the world of chess. But when the underlying system is closer to snakes and ladders, such thinking risks becoming a form of "organized folly." In snakes and ladders, players cannot plan ten moves ahead because they do not know what number the next dice roll will show.

This contradiction has created a kind of "anomie" in international affairs, a breakdown of clear rules. In one moment, a conventional logic such as "missile for missile" may apply. In the next, a cyberattack can disrupt critical systems and send the player to lower levels.

## Shifting positions of king & pawn

In chess, the value of pieces is fixed. The king is paramount and pawns are expendable. But in this hybrid environment, that hierarchy can collapse. A small non-state group or a limited operational unit can act as a ladder, pushing a broader front forward. Conversely, targeting senior leadership — a piece at the "king" level — can destabilize the entire system. Recent developments, including the assassination of high-level figures and rapid shifts within power structures, highlight how unstable the playing field has become. Just as observers begin to signal the end of an era (falling from the tail of a snake), new appointments and rapid adjustments emerge, allowing actors to regain lost ground.

## Endgame: Does anyone truly win?

In snakes and ladders, victory comes with reaching the final square. But in today's chessboard of war, it is unclear what victory actually means and where the final square is. Is it the total defeat of an adversary or the achievement of lasting peace?

The closer the actors move toward what appears to be an endpoint, the greater the risks become with more snakes. Tensions intensify and even minor miscalculations carry heavy costs.

We are no longer in an era defined by the structured rivalries of the Cold War or the simpler games of the colonial era. Today's environment of "snakes and ladders chess" where pieces should be arranged with the precision of chess, yet players must always be prepared to overhaul the entire plan at the single sting of a snake.

To survive on this board, "chess intelligence" alone is no longer sufficient; rather, "snakes and ladders resilience" is required, the capacity to recover from setbacks and recognize that neither success nor failure is permanent. The dice are still rolling, and the board remains unstable, waiting for the next move. The hope is that rationality can prevail in this high-stakes game, restraining the snakes of malice and war before the entire board is consumed in the fire of a "bad roll" of the dice.